

THE TEST OF STRENGTH:
EXPLAINING GERMANY'S RELUCTANCE TOWARDS NUCLEAR
WEAPONS 1945-2011

BY
LIEUTENANT COLONEL LOTHAR SAUERMANN

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APPROVAL

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JAMES W. FORSYTH, JR (Date)

STERLING MICHAEL PAVELEC (Date)

DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US or German Governments, Departments of Defense, Air Forces, or Air University.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel Lothar Sauermann was born in Aachen, Germany, and joined the German Air Force in 1989. After graduating from the University of the German Armed Forces with a degree in Electrical Engineering, he went through Weapon Systems Operator training in Pensacola, Florida and Cottesmore, Great Britain, to fly the Tornado in the Electronic Combat and Reconnaissance (ECR) role. He took an exchange assignment in 2002 to fly the EA-6B Prowler with the US Navy out of Whidbey Island for three years. Afterwards, he was selected to command the 1st Squadron of FBW 32 in Lechfeld which was followed by a staff assignment as Electronic Combat Operations Officer at the German Air Force Air Operations Command. Lieutenant Colonel Sauermann is a senior navigator with over 1500 flying hours. In addition to his engineering degree he also has a Masters degree in Military Operational Art from Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB.



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ABSTRACT

This study comprises an analysis of the German nuclear policy and encompasses two major aspects. First, an attempt to explain Germany's reluctance towards nuclear weapons, and secondly, an analysis of the implications of the findings for Germany's nuclear posture in the future. The research begins with a look at Germany's recent history following WWII with particular emphasis on its politics and nuclear ambitions. The historic part is separated into three chapters, the phase when Germany was disarmed and carefully began to regain signs of political life, followed by the struggle to rearm, and finally Germany's way into the Western Alliance. The underlying argument points out the German government's persistent strife for nuclear ownership in order to regain political status beyond its initial goal of national sovereignty and reunification. Watching its neighbors gaining prestige and status through their independent nuclear weapons program the young Republic undertook several attempts to gain control over those weapons, but ultimately failed. As will be pointed out during this study, the German population did not entirely share its government's enthusiasm for nuclear weapons. This fact was never sufficiently appreciated by the authorities hence protests accompanied the political decision-making process from the start. Chapter five analyzes other options for a German nuclear posture such as an independent nuclear weapon program as well as no nuclear weapons at all by implementing a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. In the last Chapter, the findings of the historic study as well as case studies of Chapter five will be analyzed with regards to a feasible nuclear strategy for the Federal Republic.

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Introduction

...the United States will take concrete steps toward a world without nuclear weapons. To put an end to Cold War thinking, we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy and urge others to do the same.

President Barak Obama

It appears as if Germany has heard the President's call and is only too willing to follow. That, in itself, would not be a complete surprise considering the country's close ties with US policies since World War II. With Germany's security strategy deeply embedded into NATO's plans, the country seems to have followed its transatlantic partner on more than just bilateral levels. But, are Germany's policies always strictly hand-me-downs from more potent political partners and is the latest reluctance towards nuclear weapons just another outburst of pro-American policy? Before analyzing this in detail, a look at the current nuclear strategies of the US, NATO, and Germany will provide some insight on how these strategies cope with the necessity for a nuclear posture and how they reflect the strife for a nuclear weapon-free world.

Nuclear weapons and current security strategies

While the United States reviews and adjusts its National Security Strategy at predetermined times, a comparable paper for NATO is issued on an irregular basis. This is certainly caused by the ever changing number of member states throughout the previous decade as well as a rapidly changing security environment and requirements for the alliance. Finding an agreeable solution for one country is apparently easier than achieving the same for 28 independent countries. For Germany, once at the front line of the political divide in central Europe, things changed more significantly throughout the late 80s and 90s.

US Security Strategy

While the US President stated the long-term goals with regards to nuclear weapons in his speech in Prague, it is also apparent that “the conditions that would ultimately permit the United States and others to give up their nuclear weapons without risking greater international instability and insecurity ... do not exist today.”¹ There are, however, multiple options towards achieving those conditions and the US seems willing to assume the leadership role. An initial goal is to reduce the quantity of weapons and increase the quality of the remaining ones. The agreement on a renewed START with Russia is considered one of those steps. At the same time, the reliability of those weapons has to be increased and time to command and control for the President decreased.² Steps to modernize the nuclear forces are one means of ensuring that the US will not lose any of its capabilities that are required to achieve its goals in a changed security environment.

Part of this environment is the perceived increased overall threat of a nuclear attack while the likelihood of an attack against NATO is considered to be at a historic low.³ Nuclear weapons in the hands of international terrorist groups, enabled through the uncontrolled proliferation of capable weapons and nuclear material, increase a dangerous situation of nuclear weapons under the control of irresponsible states in violation of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Those threats require a new approach to dealing with a nuclear weapons scenario. Detection and tracking of material, summarized under enhancing nuclear forensics, as well as assembled weapons has to be

¹ US Department of Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review Report," (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, April 2010), xv.

² Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review Report," vi.

³ Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review Report," xii.

improved.⁴ At the same time, the old threats of nuclear coercion have not dissipated completely and have to be addressed accordingly.

Although the prevention of WMD proliferation and the reduction of nuclear weapons in general is part of the national policy, nuclear, as well as overwhelming conventional capabilities, will remain an essential pillar of the United States' defense posture in order to counter any threat towards both its and allied interests. The emphasis has shifted, however, from an obvious reliance on nuclear weapons towards a more pronounced conventional component. Modernized weapons that provide overwhelming capabilities covering both spectrums allow the United States to issue a 'negative security assurance' stating that "the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations."⁵ This new approach to dealing with threats to international security should by no means indicate the abolition of the security umbrella provided for allies and partners. The consideration of the needs of partnering states and their interests will also remain part of the US security environment. Turning away from previously given security assurances is viewed as counter-productive since it might entice non-nuclear states into acquiring nuclear weapons for their own protection, thereby defeating attempts to limit the spread of such weapons.⁶ At this time, the security umbrella includes the presence of US nuclear weapons with NATO-members who deem such presence necessary for their own security.

The security assurance extends beyond US weapons that are part of the triad. It continues on to include a combination of dual-capable aircraft under sole US control as well as the nuclear sharing

⁴ US Department of Defense, "Quadrennial Defense Review Report," (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 2010)

⁵ Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review Report," vii.

⁶ Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review Report," xii.

arrangements between the US and selected NATO countries. Although criticized by some US experts as well as non-US NATO countries as outdated, this arrangement is still considered to “contribute to Alliance cohesion and provide reassurance to allies and partners....”⁷ The tactical nature of the weapons and platforms under the changed geopolitical situation in Europe remains cause for the ever-reappearing questioning of costs and benefits. So far, however, the arrangement is part of the US strategy and changes are only considered possible in agreement with the Alliance.

NATO Security Strategy

In addition to the United States, the only countries within NATO to possess a nuclear capability are Great Britain and France, a nuclear posture beyond the sharing arrangement is still part of the Alliance’s strategic concept. The evolution of this concept from its last update in the previous millennium, dated in 1999, to its present state, signed in 2010, reveals commonalities with the comparable US document as well as issues unique to the European theater. Based on recommendations from a Group of Experts assembled to support the drafting of a new security strategy for the Alliance, the document was finalized and signed by the heads of the member states in November 2010 in Lisbon. Three main points provide background information for putting Germany’s strategy and options in perspective with regards to nuclear weapons.

First, deterrence will remain a core capability of the Alliance and be based on a suitable mix of both nuclear and conventional capabilities.⁸ The necessity to provide nuclear forces as long as there are nuclear weapons available outside of NATO states closely resembles the US position. Acknowledging a nuclear scenario is less likely, the

⁷ Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review Report," xii.

⁸ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation," (NATO Multimedia library: <http://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf> (accessed 28 December 2010), November 2010), Section 17.

signatory states also expressed a heavier reliance on conventional forces. In order to ensure that the United States does not have to carry an overwhelming part of the burden in this area as well, the European members are urged to focus on avoiding duplications and maximize cost-effectiveness.⁹

Secondly, the main contributor of the Alliance's nuclear deterrence capability will be a strategic nuclear force. It is obvious that, although Great Britain and France possess a limited number of strategic nuclear assets, the US will have to provide the main bulk of appropriate weapons. The value of demonstrating cohesiveness and solidarity by providing this nuclear umbrella is not explicitly mentioned anymore in the 2010 concept, but it was the basis for the recommendations given by the Group of Experts.¹⁰ The main contribution by the European members to the Alliance's nuclear posture is their participation in "collective defense planning in nuclear roles, in peacetime basing of nuclear forces, and in command, control and consultation arrangements."¹¹ Interestingly, however, no concrete demands for sub-strategic forces, such as dual capable aircraft for delivery of tactical nuclear weapons, are stated. The previous document still included this burden for the European partners and the recent US NPR seems to imply the necessity for those forces as well.¹²

Thirdly, in line with the US President's goals, the new concept emphasizes the willingness to work towards a nuclear weapon-free world.

⁹ NATO "Strategic Concept 2010," Section 32.

¹⁰ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Nato 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement: Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for Nato," (NATO Multimedia library: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_63654.htm (accessed 28 December 2010), May 2010)

¹¹ NATO "Strategic Concept 2010," Section 19.

¹² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The Alliance's Strategic Concept" (NATO Multimedia library: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 28 December 2010), April 1999), Section 64.

Just like the United States, NATO shares the evaluation that the conditions for such an approach are not yet met and although the willingness to reduce the number of weapons is apparent it does not appear to be unconditional anymore. The previous document dated 1999 mentioned numerous times the striving for an absolute minimum concerning the numbers of nuclear weapons. The latest document seems to imply that this minimum has been reached, unless Russia is willing to move towards a common goal in this regard. Although the intention not to target any particular country or consider it an adversary is restated, concerns regarding Russian capabilities and stockpiles are unambiguously mentioned in the 2010 document. Further steps towards weapons reduction are clearly connected to reciprocity in partnership demanded from the Russian government. At least with regards to nuclear disarmament, an old adversary appears to have reemerged in the eyes of European member states.¹³ A more detailed differentiation of which group of states is more concerned is given in the Group of Experts declaration.

Germany's policy

The most recent official document concerning Germany's security concept including its attitude towards nuclear weapons was released in 2006. The 2006 White Paper is still the basis for the German Armed Forces' required capabilities, as pointed out by the Generalinspekteur in November of 2010.¹⁴ German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the German Secretary of Defense reconfirmed in 2006 that the foundation for German security planning is and will remain the European unity and transatlantic partnership. Both politicians emphasize the importance of Germany's integration into NATO and the United States' role in

¹³ NATO "Strategic Concept 2010," Section 26.

¹⁴ Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr aus Anlass der Bundeswehrtagung 2010, „*Die Bundeswehr Von Morgen: Grundüberlegungen Zur Strukturellen Ausplanung Des Zukünftigen Fähigkeitsprofils*“, 23 November 2010.

addressing European security issues.¹⁵ Therefore, the close links between the respective security statements of NATO and the United States are not particularly surprising. However, while the overall threat and security assessment is generally synchronized, the gap between rhetoric and reality concerning Germany's role in the nuclear arena appears to widen. Certainly, the necessity for nuclear weapons in NATO's security strategy is acknowledged and their value for deterrence and prevention of coercion recognized. Germany also promises that "it will play its role to warrant a fair burden sharing in concert with the NATO concept of 1999."¹⁶ What seems to be missing, though, is a concrete suggestion of how this role is defined in practical terms. The previous strategic paper dated 1994 attacked this problem assigning the German Air Force the task: "The provision of aircraft as nuclear weapon carriers is an expression of the Alliance's willingness to share the risk and burden involved and a requirement if Germany is to have a voice in matters concerning NATO's nuclear precautions."¹⁷ A comparable statement in the latest strategic concept is missing. Instead, a statement seemingly preempting the US president's speech in Prague promotes the strife for a nuclear weapon free world.

Germany's present position: How did we get here?

Is the gap between public statements and written policy actually widening or is there a method to the madness? Was there a change in German nuclear policy after 1994 or is it a long standing aversion towards nuclear weapons that Germany can now afford to promote? Reports from news media and even politicians seem to suggest that

¹⁵ Federal Minister of Defense on behalf of the German Federal Government, *Weissbuch Zur Sicherheitspolitik Deutschlands Und Zur Zukunft Der Bundeswehr* (Berlin, Germany: Press and Information Office of the German Federal Government, October 2006), 10.

¹⁶ Government, *Weissbuch Zur Sicherheitspolitik Deutschlands Und Zur Zukunft Der Bundeswehr*, 33.

¹⁷ Federal Minister of Defense on behalf of the German Federal Government, *White Paper 1994: White Paper on the Security of the Federal Republic of Germany and on the Situation and Future of the Bundeswehr* (Bonn, Germany: Press and Information Office of the German Federal Government, 1994), 112.

Germany is preparing to abolish their nuclear commitment altogether. Only month after his statements, indicating that he wanted to ensure the removal of the US warheads, former Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier was not reelected into the government, whereas Guido Westerwelle, who voiced similar convictions, is the acting Foreign Minister at this time.¹⁸ In the midst of one of the most significant and consequential reductions of the German Armed Forces, from its approximately 255,000 troops to about 180,000 including effectively abolishing the draft system, Germany will also have to grapple with the decision as to whether it prefers to maintain its policy of support for nuclear sharing or not.¹⁹ Even though, following the public discussion, it appears unthinkable that Germany could strive for anything but a nuclear weapon-free state, the present government, under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel, is known for its realpolitik. After all, Germany's government's action behind the scenes has not always resembled its broad public outburst of peace-movements. Its decision makers were mostly influenced by the complicated security situation in Europe while the population was taking its convictions to the streets. Has this changed or does Germany actually still have different options and needs with regards to its nuclear weapons strategy?

In order to find reliable answers, one has to go further back in history. A closer look at Germany's post WWII history and the development of its National Security Strategy will reveal that, although closely tied to US and NATO policy, Germany's reluctance towards nuclear weapons also has a history of its own. The geopolitical situation as well as the social fabric of the German people greatly influenced its

¹⁸ Foreign Minister Wants US Nukes out of Germany in <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,618550,00.html> accessed on 01/22/11

¹⁹ Strukturkommission der Bundeswehr, *Bericht der Strukturkommission der Bundeswehr, Oktober 2010: Vom Einsatz her Denken Konzentration, Flexibilitaet, Effizienz, (Koellen Druck+Verlag GmbH: Bonn, 2010)* 26.

course. Rather than agreeing on a common policy regarding nuclear weapons, the public's opinion in Germany often differed significantly from the course the US had envisioned. Taking all this into consideration, it is feasible to discuss the impact of Germany adapting different options for a viable short and long-term security strategy, not only for Germany itself but for the security environment in central Europe.

Research Method and Roadmap

This thesis is divided into four sections. In the first section, the problem is presented and put into perspective based on the current strategic environment. The role of nuclear deterrence within various security strategies and Germany's visibly growing apprehension towards nuclear weapons will be investigated.

Section two is a historic overview of the security environment after WWII with particular focus on the situation involving Germany. It begins in Chapter 2 by putting security needs within central Europe into perspective with regards to the political situation in post war Europe. After setting the stage, Chapter 3 will hone in on the developments leading to Germany's rearmament and involvement in new alliances. The evolution of the US National Security Strategy and its impact on Germany's situation as well as its European neighbors will be analyzed. In Chapter 4, the investigation focuses on the developments that led to Germany's participation in the nuclear weapons sharing program. Some light is shed on Germany's perceived need for, motivation to acquire, and control over these weapons. It includes the initial phase, when US systems were stationed on German soil, and extend to the point when Germany provided delivery systems. The time frames of these three Chapters partially overlap since events shaping Germany's phases of disarmament, regaining armed forces, and getting involved in the nuclear sharing program also coincide with each other.

Section three looks beyond the German case study at other available options regarding a nuclear posture. They include: First, an independent nuclear weapons program. The French, who developed their own nuclear force called *Force de Frappe*, will serve as a case study. A second option is not to include nuclear weapons at all. The idea of rejecting ownership of nuclear weapons along with capabilities to employ them will be integrated into the concept of a nuclear weapon free zone. The basic setup and specific examples will highlight the benefits and problems associated with this strategy. An investigation into the concept of nuclear sharing will conclude this section. Representing the strategy that Germany adapted after WWII, the question of conflict with existing treaties will be revisited and put into perspective. Furthermore, Canada will serve as a case study of a country that has also embarked on the nuclear sharing program.

Section four of this thesis will summarize the results of the previous chapters looking at the impact of Germany's history with regards to nuclear weapons and discussing the impact of adapting one of the options presented in section three. Recommendations will focus on short and long- term effects of Germany's nuclear posture, whether this includes nuclear weapons or not.

Chapter 1

The Beginning: Germany Disarmed

Why was the German question so important? After World War II, Europe was divided between east and west, and the division of Europe, broadly speaking, provided an answer to the fundamental political question of how the two sides, the Soviet Union and the western powers, could get along: each would have a free hand on its side of the line of demarcation. But there was one great exception to that general rule, and this had to do with Germany.

Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*

General Situation in Central Europe

While the US was economically and militarily at its zenith, Russia and the European allies - and their industrial bases - were devastated. Germany was occupied and without a functioning economy to support its population. In the east, Russia was creating *fait accompli* concerning the post war boundaries and sending millions of refugees on life threatening journeys to the west. Under those circumstances, the allies met in Potsdam to decide the future of central Europe, formerly known as Germany, and its population. Whatever decision they agreed upon would be formative not only for the prior aggressor but also reach far beyond Germany's borders. The ends, ways, and means the participating parties envisioned of proceeding from here could not have been any more different. The only thing both sides were able to agree on was that neither wanted to see a united Germany joining the other one's team.¹ This inability to find a consensus eventually led to the beginning of the

¹ Marc Trachtenberg assembled a formidable summary of the developments concerning Germany in the post war era superbly suitable for the foundation of this thesis. Especially the interests and motivations of the western allies are thoroughly reflected, hence will be cited frequently, as well as some of his sources, throughout the respective paragraphs. Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace : the making of the European settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1999), 59.

Cold War, not only dividing Europe but bringing the world to the brink of widespread hostilities.

Western allies' interests and concerns

Although geographically sorted into east and west, the allies were initially not as united as the situation would have demanded in order to counter-balance Stalin and his assertive attitude. While the United States and Great Britain shared their fate of having to replace their President and Prime Minister respectively, their economic and military situations were diametrically opposed. The French, joining late and being geographically the most exposed to a possibly resurrecting Germany, had their own reservations and plans to deal with their former attacker. In addition to economic and political problems, the ideological vacuum in central Europe was also up for grabs after the Nazi regime collapsed and the denazification process came to a close.² While the communists still had some strongholds in France, Italy, and Germany, democracy was largely stifled by the Russian dictatorship in their sphere of influence.

The United States: From cooperation to deterrence

Feelings in the United States towards the 'German question' were torn. On the one side, the sense for justice demanded that the Germans be punished for their horrific atrocities committed during the war and that reparations be paid to make up for the financial losses imposed on their victims. The plan, developed by Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr., suggested turning Germany into an agrarian society, and fell had numerous supporters.³ On the other hand, starvation and social unrest had to be avoided in order to prevent a resurrection of the bitterness that reminded the Germans of the treaty of Versailles.⁴

² Mary Fulbrook, *Fontana History of Germany, 1918-1990* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1992), 148-9.

³ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 16.

⁴ Fulbrook, *Fontana History of Germany*, 152.

For President Roosevelt, the key to a successful solution was to create a trusting relationship with the Russian leader. “American early postwar policy toward Germany was based on the expectation that the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union would continue after the war....”⁵ After jointly defeating the common enemy, however, Stalin had already begun to create a division between his sector and the allies’. It appeared as if cooperation was not actually in his interest and a permanent division was more than likely. Although Secretary of State James Byrnes still believed that “to work out a long term program of cooperation” beyond the question of Germany’s future was possible, the feeling that a four-party government could be agreed upon slowly faded.⁶

The long-term cooperation that Byrnes had envisioned experienced its first major setback over the settlement of the future Polish borders. The United States and Britain had a significant interest in supporting their wartime ally that had fought courageously against the Germans and the Russians. Even with the United States’ influence over the post war world, the Red Army occupying eastern Europe and exploiting their geographical proximity created facts that were hard to overturn. Stalin himself phrased it in the wake of the Yalta negotiations bluntly: “Never mind...we’ll work on it...do it our own way later.”⁷ Later in 1946, during the confrontation over the Mediterranean and Middle East, Truman once more remembered the way Poland and Germany were divided and called this proceeding “high handed outrage.”⁸ This episode from the long and painful negotiations with the Soviets had different implications for the two opponents: The Russians interpreted their victory as a failure of the United States to stand up for their allies. The western allies saw their future from that point on as going separate ways from the Soviets.

⁵ Hans Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War; The Views of German Military and Political Leaders* (Evanston, Ill., Row, Peterson, 1957), 3.

⁶ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 27.

⁷ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 10.

⁸ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 38.

Subsequently, it did not concern Byrnes too much to offer the acceptance of the Oder-Neisse line as the official border between Germany and Poland. Along with some reparations to be handed over from the western part of the occupied zone to Russia, this was supposed to be the price for going separate ways. By now it was apparent that the two powers would split, but the United States was still trying to make this separation as smooth as possible.⁹

In 1946, when Russia refused to sign off on an American initiative to treat the German economic trade policy as a single entity, the split between the two powers became more apparent. For the United States, this refusal was not as much a setback in their relations as it might have been while they were still aiming for close cooperation. Effectively, the Russian failure to commit to the Potsdam agreement, as the Americans viewed it, regained the United States its freedom of action and gave them a free hand in dealing with the economically much more capable western part of Germany.¹⁰ The limitations on industrial output, a critical factor in inhibiting self-sustainment in Western Europe, could escape the handcuffs of the Soviet veto. Particularly for the economically minded Americans, a strong industrial network was viewed as the key to transforming Germany into a divided state and diverging society, as well as reviving the other European countries. The complete opposite goals of the two competing main powers, with Russia attempting to extract reparations and the United States trying to use the German example as an engine for prosperity, explained the difficulty in coming to an agreement.¹¹ In the end, the failure to cooperate - intentionally or not - pushed wide open the door for dividing Germany. The new goal was to

⁹ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 28.

¹⁰ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 46.

¹¹ Fulbrook, *Fontana History of Germany*, 150.

establish a West German government, while blaming Russia for the failure to establish a united Germany.¹²

In order to succeed in this task, two objectives had to be achieved. The Germans had to agree that life under Russian control would only be the second best option and an incentive had to be provided, to look optimistically into the future as part of the western alliance. The first objective was met by the time the refugees from the occupied eastern parts of the former German territories spilled into the western zones providing ample stories about the way the Red Army had treated them. The second one was initiated by Byrnes during a speech in Stuttgart on 6 September 1946. While addressing German administrators, he provided them with a glimpse of hope at being allowed back into the international society given that they prove willing and capable of pulling their weight.¹³ Discouraged by Soviet stalling tactics and afraid that Germany might collapse while the occupants deliberated about the appropriate measures to be taken, Marshal proved to be another disgruntled politician, ready to proceed without their former eastern ally. His plan envisioned integrating the West German economy with its industrial areas and valuable resources of coal and coke into a democratic Western Europe. Supported by stimulating subsidies, the war torn economies would be jump started and as soon as possible should reach the capability to support a normal lifestyle.¹⁴ In combination with the Truman doctrine, enunciated on 12 March 1947 to the American Congress and explaining the American policy of containing the advance of Communism, the Marshal Plan was a significant factor in starting the Cold War by uniting Western Europe and the US against a common enemy in the east.¹⁵

¹² Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 51.

¹³ Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War*, 5.

¹⁴ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 62-5.

¹⁵ Fulbrook, *Fontana History of Germany*, 157.

The resolve to proceed separately was put to the test not too long afterwards. The deterioration of the diplomatic situation towards the end of 1947 and the beginning of 1948 culminated in the Berlin blockade in June of the same year.¹⁶ Cut off from all land lines of communication, the allies in Berlin had to decide whether or not they were willing to take a stand for the encircled city. Militarily, the three western occupants believed they were in no condition to withstand a Russian onslaught. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the United States abolish any thoughts of a military confrontation. Conventional troops were not in a sufficient ready state and the 97 war-proven divisions were reduced to a mere 12 divisions by 1949. Therefore, the assessment was that to start hostilities over Berlin “would be neither militarily prudent nor strategically sound.”¹⁷ In any case, it was a common belief that the only reason why the Red Army had not overrun Western Europe was the unilateral threat of nuclear weapons in the hands of the United States.¹⁸ Especially during the Berlin crisis, Russia was thought to have demonstrated a much more assertive posture. The 1949 detonation of the first Russian nuclear device significantly changed the military balance with major implications for diplomacy. In 1948, however, General Lucius Clay, the highest United States military representative in Germany, saw the crisis as an opportunity to exploit a show of resolve by not faltering under Russian pressure and demonstrating a deterrence posture.¹⁹ Russia, on the other hand, was fully expecting to succeed in coercing the United States and West Germany. After the crisis in April 1948 they publicized a report stating that “The German population believe that the Anglo-Americans have retreated before the Russians, and

¹⁶ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 66.

¹⁷ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 81.

¹⁸ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 66.

¹⁹ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 82.

that this testifies to the Russians' strength.”²⁰ Although still in its infancy, the method of maintaining a status quo by credibly denying the opponent the benefits of hostile actions was successfully implemented.

France: Implanting the European idea

France was the last of the victorious powers to join the occupation forces and receive a zone, carved out of the western allies' territory. In addition, France did not participate in the Potsdam negotiations about the future of Germany, hence failed to sign the agreements.²¹ Although this should have allowed the French vast liberties in running their particular zone as they deemed necessary and vetoing some of the allies' ideas towards Germany, their influence on the overall policy was ultimately limited by their desperate dependency on American support. With their economy in as bad a shape as the British and German, they also had to rely on help from the outside.²² Besides those economic and diplomatic issues, France was also grappling with internal political problems. Its large group of communists initially hampered the government from openly supporting the United States vis a vis the Soviets, making it even more difficult to trace their actual intentions which were caught between rhetoric and reality.²³

One of the potential agreements where the French used their veto power as non-signatories to the Potsdam conference was the attempt to implement a central administration in Germany. Two main reasons were given for this decision. First, France was pursuing a split of the highly industrial and resource rich Rhineland and Ruhr area and treating them as separate entities.²⁴ Motivating factors were most certainly the knowledge that this part of Germany contained the key to the power of a

²⁰ Roger G. Miller, *To Save a City: The Berlin Airlift 1948-1949*, (Texas University Press, College Station, 2000), 23.

²¹ Fulbrook, *Fontana History of Germany*, 133.

²² Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 66.

²³ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 72.

²⁴ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 44.

future neighbor and France was, at least initially, aiming to replace Germany as the economic hub, insisting on German output limitations and reparations.²⁵ A second reason was given by the French foreign minister Georges Bidault. He claimed that the real reason behind the French veto was the fear of Russian influence on the German administration since this system would “inevitably lead to the eventual setting up of a Soviet dominated central government in Germany.”²⁶

Looking at France’s geographical position, its vital interest in its western neighbor’s future development not only politically but also economically and especially militarily is easily understandable. Feeding the fear of a reemerging, united Germany was the thought of the latter’s alignment with its former ally in the east. Memories of the Rapallo treaty and previous German-Russian alliances had not faded and helped to support a divided-Germany solution.²⁷ Part of the solution appeared to be tying Western Germany to Western Europe, hence limiting its power by splitting it up and controlling the western half by integration into European institutions. To achieve this goal, the idea of Germany as an integral part of a united Western Europe had to be implanted into the German population’s conscious, keeping them occupied with a new task and helping them overcome the division of their country.²⁸ Therefore, a situation where Germany would drown in self-pity, like after the Great War, could be avoided and their intellectual and physical capability steered towards something useful for the European nations, especially France as its immediate neighbor. Part of this integration process was the concept of tying key industries like coal and steel to a European economy, known as the Schuman plan. The plan quickly found support

²⁵ Michael J Hogan, *The Marshall Plan : America, Britain, and the reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1987), 32.

²⁶ Bidault in Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, p. 71.

²⁷ Fulbrook, *Fontana History of Germany*, 166.

²⁸ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 76.

in the United States promising to reduce European dependency on American aid.²⁹

A resurrected Germany was not the only threat to France and, as President de Gaulle already realized in November of 1945, not even the most dangerous one. The Russian threat was two-fold in nature: from within, by their own French communist countrymen, and from the outside, by the Soviets, who were perceived as threatening to overrun all of Europe. Close cooperation with the United States appeared to be inevitable for France's survival.³⁰ Although the American willingness to unconditionally commit to Europe's defense was not unquestioned, it was deemed the only valid solution for both of France's external threats. In a divided Germany, US presence would serve two purposes. First, they would defend the Europeans against the Soviets and secondly, they would keep close control over Germany, ensuring that they would be kept divided, politically and militarily too weak to play a significant role. Even if the American forces were unable to stop the Red Army instantaneously, they would serve as a trip wire and bring the full might of the US economy and military into the theater, a concept that would last throughout the Cold War.³¹

Within a few years after hostilities ceased in 1945, France had shifted its security mindset from focusing on Germany to countering the threat from Russia. Although this shift was apparent fairly early on during the post war years, France did not completely let its guard down with respect to Germany as would become apparent during the rearmament negotiations. Again, the idea of integrating a remilitarized Germany into a European concept and the fear of the Russian threat

²⁹ White House, *Second WH meeting of Truman and French Prime Minister Pleven; issues discussed: German rearmament, the Soviet threat, French fighting in Indochina, French role in defense of Western Europe*. Memorandum, Feb 6, 1951. Document is now declassified.

³⁰ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 70.

³¹ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 74.

helped to overcome the resentments regarding allowing their neighbor to rearm at all.

Great Britain:

Britain's financial and economic situation after the war was similar to France's. The British were equally dependent on US support to get resources for their own industry as well as the industrial part of Germany (*Ruhrgebiet*) that belonged to their occupation zone. Although rich in resources and industrial potential, these advantages could not be exploited due to both wartime destruction and production limitations imposed by the council of the occupation forces. Furthermore, this particular part of Germany lacked agricultural productivity and was subsequently unable to sustain itself.³² Consequently, Great Britain was forced to introduce bread rations in its home country in 1946 and borrow American dollars to feed the German population in its occupation zone.³³ Politically, the British enjoyed support from multiple groups throughout Europe who both hated Soviet communism and disliked US materialism. Militarily, however, they depended, just like the rest of Europe, on the United States to keep the Russians at bay.³⁴

The British policy towards Germany like the Americans' was influenced by a similar development, ranging from attempting to cooperate to distrust towards the Russians. Ernest Bevin, the newly appointed British foreign secretary, was initially more inclined to treat Germany as a whole.³⁵ He was especially afraid that "setting up a government in western Germany and then partitioning the country" would eventually promote the building of blocks and lead to war.³⁶ Nevertheless, the British were also amongst the first to even consider setting up western partial states that would have to be strengthened in

³² Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 66.

³³ Fulbrook, *Fontana History of Germany*, 161.

³⁴ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 67.

³⁵ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 32.

³⁶ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 60.

order to serve as a bulwark against communism.³⁷ The British were interested in a more global solution for reorganizing the post war world. As a former empire, they had multiple loose strings in their hands and were willing to relinquish the eastern European sphere to Russia in exchange for a free hand in the Middle East and the Mediterranean.³⁸

By 1947, the British hope of negotiating a common agreement with the Soviets faltered. Deprived of any delusions of solving the deteriorating situation within Germany in concert with the Russians, the British adopted a more hard-line approach. They eventually followed the American lead in setting up a western German solution. Once committed to the 'American way' they continued to play a key role in supporting the American attempts to show strength when facing the Russians and by contributing significantly during the Berlin crisis.

The Soviet sphere of influence

The territory east of the French, British, and American zones was occupied by the Red Army and Stalin considered it his sphere of interest. Economically, Russia was as devastated as the western European countries. This had a large impact on the ways and means the Soviets employed when dealing with the occupied territory. The perception of the readiness state and the motivation of the Red Army was obviously distorted by Stalin's aggressive posture. In addition, Russia lacked any nuclear capability. The Soviets were able to watch this weapon's devastating impact on Japan from the distance.

Russian policy towards the United States

From the beginning of their cooperation, Moscow monitored the American way of supporting the western European countries economically while suspiciously viewing the United States as being in the highest stage of dynamic imperialism. At the same time, Russia was

³⁷ Fulbrook, *Fontana History of Germany*, 161.

³⁸ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 36.

economically and physically in ruins.³⁹ It was hoping for and dependent on the United States to keep its support alive. Support already flowed during the war and Stalin did not see any reason why it should cease at the end of hostilities. He was more than perturbed when the Americans refused to continue their material and financial support. This change in American policy was viewed as a hostile act.⁴⁰ Stalin, however, was initially not going to challenge the United States but try his luck with the British. Knowing about their attempts to solve their empire related issues in the Middle East and Mediterranean, he pushed hard in that area while demanding he be allowed to station troops in Turkey, hence being able to control the strategic geographical position of the Bosphorus.⁴¹

Even though Stalin did not intend to confront the United States militarily, he did watch it closely during their initial negotiations. When it became clear that they had given up resistance to Russian plans concerning Poland, Stalin assumed that “it was hardly likely that the United States would take a stand over democracy elsewhere in eastern Europe.”⁴² For Stalin, this was an obvious demonstration of the divergence between US rhetoric and actions indicating to him that it is always worth trying and then sort the rest out later. This would become a recurrent theme in Russian ‘Salami’ politics.

The next major challenge for American resolve was Berlin. From the beginning, Stalin had planned to use the enclave to his advantage. He had delayed the western troops from entering the city until the Red Army could gain significant control. The city was supposed to become a symbol of the West’s weakness and lack of stamina. His plans were strengthened by the Americans’ failure to demand guarantees for

³⁹ Gerhard Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe : the emergence and development of East-West conflict, 1939-1953* (Landham, Md : Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 72.

⁴⁰ Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, 73.

⁴¹ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 36.

⁴² Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 13.

unobstructed land access to Berlin to support their troops and the population they were responsible for. Throughout the crisis, Stalin was obviously aware of the American military's weakness, but he refused to exploit it for three major reasons. First, he was not economically capable of launching a major offensive he deemed necessary in order to expel the allies from the city and follow up during a possibly ensuing war. Secondly, he did not own nuclear weapons while the Americans had impressively demonstrated their capability.⁴³ Last but not least, he was convinced that the winter and its detrimental impact on logistical air support would do the job for him by forcing the Allies to retreat from the encircled city.

Not only in this matter, but all major attempts to extend his power beyond the territory already occupied by the Red Army turned out to be unsuccessful. But, the Russians would keep trying.⁴⁴

The Plans for the Eastern Satellites

At a time when the Western European powers were weak, and when the United States was disarming ... the Soviet Union tightened its grip over Eastern Europe and the Balkans. It created a belt of satellite strength between Russia and the West.

Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War*

The rationale behind this offensive policy was to protect the Soviet sphere from a possible German resurrection and to gain a free avenue of approach towards Germany. It was also a clear signal of how little the United States and its western allies were willing to counter this expansionist movement in the east and south.⁴⁵

The countries themselves received little support and initial attempts to push back against the communist oppression were extinguished in their infancy. The oppositions were coerced into obedience. Hungary experienced this lack of self-determination when an

⁴³ Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, 69-74.

⁴⁴ Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, 77.

⁴⁵ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 19.

election resulted in an anti-communist majority. The Soviet leaders immediately abolished all expressions of free will such as unobstructed elections. Poland's opposition was not much better off. Terrorized and denied any legal chance to run a successful election, they were subordinated; Stalin succeeded in establishing a faithful communist regime.⁴⁶ Coercion was equally successful by keeping troops across the border from Czechoslovakia while creating a police state beginning in 1948.⁴⁷

As in eastern Germany, the communist governments served the purpose of executing Moscow's orders. After the disagreement over the Marshall Plan, Stalin removed all limitations on communist influence and dictatorship in his Satellite countries. Especially through the examples of Poland and Czechoslovakia, who were deemed too eager to cooperate with the west, Stalin was afraid to lose control, hence, he tightened his grip. He fully expected the western allies to proceed similarly in their spheres of interest.⁴⁸

The German question

The fate of Germany was ultimately linked to Russia's security concerns and strategy. A resurrected and strong West Germany was not in Russia's best interest since it would cease to be dependent on its allies for protection, hence not locked into a purely defensive policy. It might also decide to intervene in the event of an uprising in one of the eastern countries. In essence, the Soviets viewed a powerful Germany as increasing the risk of war.⁴⁹

Subsequently, the Russian strategy for the German territory was to punish the population for atrocities committed during the war, extract reparations from the occupied zone in the east, and demand additional

⁴⁶ Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, 81.

⁴⁷ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 79.

⁴⁸ Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, 138.

⁴⁹ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, vii.

reparations from the western part. The extraction of industry by disassembling whole factories and shipping them to the east had a devastating effect on the economy in that part of the country. To half-heartedly justify those actions, Stalin referred to them as “industrial disarmament.”⁵⁰ Towards unification, his attitude was initially positive, given the resources like people, coal, and industry available in the central western part. However, the fear of an even stronger German economy, eventually capable of supporting a strong military was always present.⁵¹

The punitive nature of the Russian policy towards Germany on the one hand and desperate need for economic support on the other caused the overall strategy to appear somewhat distorted. Stalin was inclined to delay Germany’s economic rehabilitation rather than to accelerate it; but, he also demanded unconditional fulfillment of all reparation. Furthermore, he pushed for a socioeconomic transformation which was certainly divergent from the western idea of a free or at least social market economy.⁵² In the long run, subsequently vetoing any increase of production in Germany would threaten the survival of that country.

The failure of negotiations on Germany’s future administration and economic progress in Moscow in 1947 was an indicator for the incompatible ideological mindsets of the major powers. This failure was blamed on economic disagreements between the United States and Russia, but ideological differences had implications as well. While the American goal was to establish a self-sustained West Germany and subsequently jump start the overall European economy, this was also supposed to “protect the free societies against the communist threat.”⁵³ The Russian veto, on the other hand, was aimed at the allies’ willingness

⁵⁰ Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, 89.

⁵¹ Caroly Woods Eisenberg, *Drawing the line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 488.

⁵² Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, 117.

⁵³ Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, 137.

to allow the spread of communist ideology into the western part of Germany and beyond. The east German *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED), installed at the beginning of 1947 with its Moscow-trained leadership cadres, was supposed to serve as role-model.⁵⁴

Along the same line of ideological discussion, Stalin declared the Marshal Plan as the American expansionist tendency inciting the class struggle between imperialism and socialism. The Russians, for their part, tried to use the French and Italian communist groups to hamper the implementation and success of that very plan.⁵⁵ In a further attempt to impose his will on his opponent, suspend the London recommendations, and bring the Allies back to the negotiating table, Stalin utilized the favorable situation he had set up early in Berlin. The ensuing crisis was the first real test for the Western Allies' resolve to confront the Soviets; a test Stalin must have been sure they would fail after his experience during the Poland-negotiations. But, again, it was the Russian strategy that lacked resolve and the Soviets restrained from undertaking any measures to inhibit the actual air bridge. Actually, they even supported the western endeavor by continuing to work in the Air Safety Center.⁵⁶

By the end of the blockade, the Russians had not achieved any of their goals. The western resolve experienced an important boost, the lines between communism and democracy were drawn in the sand and the Russians were factually locked out of the West German benefits they deemed they deserved from their victory during the war.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Eisenberg, *Drawing the line*, 489.

⁵⁵ Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, 137.

⁵⁶ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 80-7.

⁵⁷ Eisenberg, *Drawing the line*, 490.

Germany after the *Stunde Null*⁵⁸

A look at Germany at the *Stunde Null* reveals a rather grim picture of physical destruction. However, it also already shows signs of the German attitude towards the Americans and Soviets which helped to explain later why they decided to side with the western alliance rather than the Russians.

In 1945, there was hardly a German family that had not lost a son in the fighting, a daughter in the air raids, or had a missing family member in the confusion of the collapsed country. The surviving men had to live with the humiliation of the loss and a lot of them spent their time in a prison camp. The women, especially in the eastern part of Germany, were living under the constant fear – with some justification – of being raped. A large amount of living space was destroyed, predominantly in the cities, possessions were stolen, and millions were fleeing from the lost eastern provinces. In addition, hunger, lack of fuel and heating material, as well as diseases plagued the survivors.⁵⁹

Despite all the hardships and waking memories from the last war, one essential element was missing this time: there was no stab-in-the-back theory emerging; no ‘unjust’ Versailles Treaty imposed. This misery the nation had brought on themselves and the harsh conditions were seen as part of a just punishment. “By overriding private ambivalence, critical public memories triggered a fundamental learning process that helped transform German politics” and were an essential ingredient to a successful recovery.⁶⁰ However, before the recovery process could start basic needs as described in Maslow’s pyramid had to be satisfied; a task

⁵⁸ *Stunde Null* is widely used as an expression for the very beginning of the recovery after a devastating event, here the total surrender, physical destruction, and sociological reset of the German consciousness after WWII.

⁵⁹ Konrad Hugo Jarausch, “1945 and the Continuities of German History: Reflections on Memory, Historiography, and Politics,” in *Stunde Null : the end and the beginning fifty years ago*, ed. Geoffrey J. Giles (Washington, D.C. : German Historical Institute, 1997), 12.

⁶⁰ Jarausch, “1945 and the Continuities of German History,” 18

that required a functioning economy as its foundation. In the ideological vacuum that existed after the eradication of Nazism, the ability to provide food, shelter, and security for the Germans would have a large impact on their willingness to join either ideological side.

Initially, the redistribution of former German territory and assignment to Poland and Russia during the Potsdam negotiations created a flood of 11-12 million refugees ultimately pouring into mainly the western zones. Those Germans that had formerly produced food in the agricultural bread basket of Silesia and eastern Germany for 17 million inhabitants were now, after their long and exhausting journey, to a large degree unable to contribute to the economic productivity.⁶¹ With three million men dead and another estimated seven million still in POW camps, Germany was significantly lacking the manpower in 1945 to support the economy.⁶² Although women picked up the task of clearing out the cities from debris and taking over the job of providing for the families, the production of agricultural and industrial goods lagged significantly behind pre-war levels. As a result, fatigue and pervasive pessimism started to spread uncontrollably. The occupation forces' inability to agree on a common policy, hence imposing further reparation transfers, coal export, and restrictions on German production, did not contribute in rectifying the situation as General Clay rightfully stated.⁶³ In combination, those factors ensured that even if the food production was restored to pre-war levels it would have barely provided for 50% of the per capita needs or increase the consumption to 1200 calories per day as opposed to the 2700 that were theoretically required for an industrial nation.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Robert James Havinghurst, *Report on Germany* (New York, The Rockefeller Foundation, 1947), 4 and Lewis Herold Brown, *A Report on Germany* (New York, Farrar, Straus, 1947), 16.

⁶² Jarausch, "1945 and the Continuities of German History," 35.

⁶³ Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 30-1.

⁶⁴ United States Army p.1

When Secretary Byrnes addressed German local leaders in Stuttgart in 1946, the United States seemed to have made a first step towards rectifying the situation. By the time the Marshal Plan was implemented, policy makers throughout the West were alarmed about the spread of economic and social disorder in the occupation zones and the lagging pace of recovery up to that point. The Plan itself envisioned a balanced revival of the German and subsequently the European economies. Ideally, it would allow Germany to gain a self-supporting basis without threatening the economic requirements and military security of its former victims.⁶⁵ Obstacles to the plan included the communist groups in the neighboring countries and also within West Germany like the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD) who mobilized the working-class resistance and a flourishing black market.⁶⁶

Success started to prevail when currency reform was introduced to West Germany, hence causing the black market to disappear. A central administration under the leadership of Konrad Adenauer was elected and implemented. This administration was certainly a psychological necessity providing a central authority to look up to and entrust to protect civil rights. “The people of West Germany were beginning to be valued by the western powers as good democrats, partners in the international freedom fight against the evils of communism.”⁶⁷

Conclusion

At the end of World War II, the two former rivals, Germany and Russia, were physically destroyed, millions of people displaced, and most of the European economies devastated. The US, on the other hand, was economically and militarily a powerhouse providing the lifeline for a lot of the countries on either side of the future political fault line. As diverse as the four occupation forces, approaches and initial plans for a

⁶⁵ Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 30.

⁶⁶ Eisenberg, *Drawing the line*, 489. und Report 27

⁶⁷ Fulbrook, *Fontana History of Germany*, 166.

redistribution of the territories, responsibilities and resources in Europe were, they all agreed in their way that Germany would hold the key to the reconstructed continent.

The way the two opposing blocs had planned to pursue their goals was defined by their ideology and subsequent economic strategies. While Russia demanded punishment and reparations, the United States dismissed resentments quickly. Recognizing that in order to reintegrate Germany into a western society to provide a valuable bulwark against communism, they had to be offered some incentive. Those different approaches had a formative impact on the German society that, although acknowledging their wrongdoing during the war, naturally tended more towards the power that offered an honorable way back into the international community.⁶⁸

Providing food, shelter, and security, the western powers won the battle for the hearts and minds of the West German population, and successes like the Berlin airlift manifested German inclination towards a long (though not eternal) gratefulness towards the United States. But, with the economy rapidly recovering in 1949, the security problems for the young Republic had just started. Although disarmed, Germany had had the chance to witness the impact of deterrence, especially nuclear deterrence. Certainly, the concept of coercion and the lack of protection was not new to them, but they had rarely experienced it from the perspective of the receiving end. While Adenauer demonstrated that politics without military backing is difficult (but not impossible), it was undisputed that it put limits on achievable goals. The United States shared this assessment and “thus toward the end of 1950, the American policy of disarming Germany, which had prevailed since the end of World

⁶⁸ A look at Michael Walzer's *Jus post bellum* theory reveals the basic principles predicting this behavior. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars : a Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, New York: Basic Books, 2006.

War II, was reversed for political, strategic, and economic reasons.”⁶⁹ The next chapter will investigate the limits of unarmed politics.



⁶⁹ Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War*, 5.

Chapter 2

German Security, New Alliances, and the Influence of the United States

Five years after the end of WWII, Europe, although divided into East and West, had achieved a perceived balance of power. The Soviet Union's lead in conventional forces was held in check by the US's monopoly on nuclear weapons. In 1949, the balance shifted. Russia developed its own nuclear capability and an overt assertiveness of their newly acquired power to go with it. Accurately gauging the Western political and military position, Stalin attempted to use his influence to instigate further by probing the Alliance's resolution to maintain their influence in Europe and Asia.¹

After recovering from the shock of the successful Russian nuclear test, the United States had to agree that military parity needed to include stronger conventional forces. Furthermore, military leaders acknowledged that a realistic defense of Europe had to include German participation.² Things, however, were never that easy in Europe. While German rearmament was assessed as necessary, it also required a reevaluation of the Federal Republic's political status.³ Integration into the Western community of states in conjunction with economic ties appeared to be more promising and appealing to its neighbors' security concerns than Germany as a great, independent power countering the threat from the east unilaterally. One of the discussed solutions foresaw allowing Germany to join NATO while severely limiting its military power,

¹ Stalin is quoted in Trachtenberg indicating to the Chinese that he evaluated Germany and Japan as too weak and the United States as not prepared to counter any advances on their part. Marc Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace: the making of the European settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 75.

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *SHAPE Briefings for Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (US Department of Defense, July 1951) Document is now declassified.

³ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 95.

freedom of action, and sovereign status. Germany was quite agreeable to those propositions since they facilitated a way back into the international society. However, this solution still did not address the issue of who was going to provide the necessary defense forces: Europe or the United States.⁴

By July 1950, the Transatlantic Alliance agreed that a viable defense option for central Europe had to include a rearmed Germany.⁵ Thereafter, the question was not if but when and how this could be achieved. The Allies struggled with this question for another five years, each trying to balance national economic and security interests with the need for a collective defense, while Germany tried to profit politically from possible defense contributions.

The US Security Strategy: As the focus shifts

The US policy in 1950 was influenced by three major concerns: avoiding an unlimited commitment of US military forces to the European theater and turning control over to the European Allies sooner rather than later; the need to control Germany; and containing the Soviet Union and building a credible counterforce in Europe.⁶ The predominant means to achieve those goals was US military superiority based on its nuclear capability and delivery capabilities.⁷ Any early attempts to shift away from this strategy, ultimately leading to the concept of massive retaliation, were hamstrung by US and especially European shortcomings in conventional forces. Although the Truman administration attempted in its last two years in office to shift the focus to a strategy resembling the concept of a more flexible response, it lacked the means to lend it any credibility. The fact that the NATO equivalent to NSC-68, the MC14/1, was never implemented demonstrates that the

⁴ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 95.

⁵ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 107.

⁶ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 121.

⁷ Robert McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question; American Diplomacy and European Defense after World War II* (Urbana,: University of Illinois Press, 1971) 8.

western defense structure could not live up to the US expectations to respond “to all levels of aggression [by] applying force proportional to the extent of the mischief.”⁸

When North Korea invaded the South in 1950 and started the Korean War, it became apparent that Stalin’s plan to challenge the US’s sphere of influence was entering the next phase and deterrence had failed.⁹ For the United States and its already thinly stretched forces in Europe and Asia, the Korean War significantly emphasized the urgent need to tap into German human resources for the defense of Europe.¹⁰ The Pentagon increased the pressure on the State Department and the European Allies to ensure German contribution as quickly as possible.¹¹ Secretary of State Dean Acheson joined his colleagues from the Defense Department with the assessment that “there was no security in Europe without using German power.”¹² Although not quite as enthusiastic about increasing their defense spending and rearming their former enemy, the European Allies generally agreed on the US assessment and began to shift their focus from economic to defense capabilities.¹³

Countering the increasing threat from the East

The relationship with the Soviet Union visibly defined US posture in Europe, and here the situation could change significantly with ramifications for the American domestic as well as foreign policy. While the main focus in the late 40s was on economic growth and support of European Allies, US attention shifted towards the increasing military

⁸ Mark Cioc, *Pax Atomica: The Nuclear Defense Debate in West Germany During the Adenauer Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 4.

⁹ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 23.

¹⁰ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 4.

¹¹ Marc Trachtenberg and Christopher Gehrz, *America, Europe, and German Rearmament, August-September 1950: A Critique of a Myth* www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/trachtenberg/cv/ (accessed 16 November 2010) 7

¹² Trachtenberg and Gehrz, *America, Europe, and German Rearmament*, 10.

¹³ Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Situation Review: CIA 10-50* (Central Intelligence Agency, Oct. 18, 1950) Document is now declassified.

threat from the East.¹⁴ The successful test of a Russian atomic bomb in 1949 instantly reset the perception of relative security in the western hemisphere. The former strategy of limited US forces in Europe as a tripwire for a possible Russian onslaught was nullified by the latter's achieved parity in nuclear capabilities. Conventional forces to oppose a conventional attack were deemed necessary. The increase in Russian assertiveness was confirmed by evidence provided by the CIA in a report from August 1950 pointing at a large scale mobilization of war industry in the Soviet Union.¹⁵ The setbacks in defense spending and rebuilding of conventional forces in Europe, beginning in the late 40s along with a significant reduction in fielded forces by all the Allies, American and European alike, peaked in 1950-51 and had to be reversed in the face of blatant communist aggressions. The Allies had to make serious investments in their military forces, disregarding the possibility that this might provoke the Soviet Union. Subsequently, the defense budgets in all the Western countries significantly increased and the idea of "Forward defense to fight as far east as possible including going after Soviet nuclear weapons" was born.¹⁶ This major change in the security environment triggered a discussion of which strategy would be best suited to counter the communist advances with the available means.

The strategic discussion centered on the most promising deployment of nuclear capabilities, obvious conventional shortcomings, and the question of how to even define conventional weapons. The concept of deterrence emerged, especially fueled by the growing realization that a defense against a full scale Russian attack was deemed impossible.¹⁷ The United States, therefore, introduced the idea that conventional weapons could also entail nuclear weapons. US Secretary

¹⁴McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question* 5.

¹⁵ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 97-8.

¹⁶ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 100.

¹⁷ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 36.

of Defense John Foster Dulles stated, “The United States considers that the ability to use atomic weapons as conventional weapons is essential for the defense of the NATO-area in the face of the present threat. In short, such weapons must now be treated as in fact having become conventional.”¹⁸

He was supported by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) who assumed that nuclear weapons have “virtually achieved a conventional status” within the US armed forces.¹⁹ This idea was further enhanced by the fact that by 1953 the United States had acquired a whole range of different sizes of nuclear weapons. In a simplistic division based on their size, they were categorized into strategic for the large ones and large conventional in case of smaller yields. Those ‘conventional’ nuclear weapons were considered supplements for the lack of manpower within the Western defense structure.²⁰ This separation of nuclear weapons into strategic and tactical categories was congruent with the developing strategy of deterring Russia with strategic nuclear weapons and providing the means to stop it from rolling over Western Europe. Subsequently, though, this indicated that a “future European war would be the continuation of the last-with more devastating consequences.”²¹

A strategy based on airpower armed with nuclear weapons as a deterrent became the central part of the Eisenhower-administration’s New Look policy. According to Dulles, even local aggressions would be met without delay by a nuclear counter attack against the perpetrator and at a place of the United States’ choosing. The basic idea behind this strategy was to demonstrate a credible deterrence posture and therefore share more basic security with the European Allies at a reduced cost for

¹⁸ Dulles in Mark Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 6.

¹⁹ Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 3rd ed. (Hounds-mills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 73.

²⁰ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 73.

²¹ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 11.

the United States.²² The concept of utilizing this new weapon in order to counter any Soviet threat without the extra burden on the American economy or even “undermining [our] fundamental values and institutions” became quite popular. Under the New Look, the employment of nuclear weapons was imagined possible whenever it was deemed necessary.²³

This increased reliance on nuclear weapons and the assumption of getting “more bang for the buck” resulted in the US strategy NSC-162/2, known as the doctrine of massive retaliation.²⁴ It was coined under Dulles in 1954 and “it was widely assumed to be founded on an undiscriminating threat to respond to any communist-inspired aggression, however marginal the confrontation, by means of a massive nuclear strike against the centers of the Soviet Union and China.”²⁵ As a result the initial trend of flexible response, visible during the last two years of the Truman administration, was reversed. The link between the offending action and resulting response had been removed. The Allies left the Soviet Union guessing about their response to a possible aggression and therefore raised the stakes of an Eastern invasion. The only remaining problem appeared to be finding a credible posture to convince the Soviet leaders that the West actually had the will to execute this strategy.²⁶

The benefits and apparent effects on the Russians could not have gone unnoticed amongst the Western European Allies and Adenauer’s Germany. Confronted with an economic abyss, particularly France and Britain must have joyfully watched the American demonstration of an

²² Roger Hilsman, “NATO: The Developing Strategic Context.” in *NATO and American Security*, edited by Klaus Knorr, 11-37 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959) 26-7

²³ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 77.

²⁴ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 6.

²⁵ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 72.

²⁶ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 83.

affordable yet safe strategy, while the Germans were most certainly more impressed with the achieved effects rather than the low costs involved.

Motivating Allies to build a European defense

The credibility of the massive retaliation strategy had flaws and needed conventional backing in order to make it work. A possible Russian attack in central Europe had to be stopped first in order for the US nuclear forces to be effectively employed. After all, the Europeans could not be expected to show any motivation to continue the fight after they had been overrun by Soviet forces and pushed towards the English Channel.²⁷ Furthermore, with a perceived significant nuclear potential in Eastern Europe, the Allies also had to expect that at least part of the US nuclear arsenal would be neutralized. Hence, only a solid conventional defense system in Europe could effectively back the nuclear posture and lend credibility to the deterrence strategy.²⁸ Concerning the composition of those forces and their weaponry, the Allies had vastly different ideas. The Europeans viewed the American forces as a visible sign of US commitment and pointed at their inability to shift any more resources to increased defense spending, while the United States was hoping for a stronger engagement on the European side.²⁹ US troops were already stretched thin and further deployments of forces had to be substituted by tactical nuclear weapons.³⁰ But, even those nuclear weapons that were just recently greeted as a low-cost solution for all defense problems posed some employment problems. The 280-mm atomic cannons that the United States deployed to Germany in 1953, for example, had to be placed left of the Rhine in order not to be immediately run over by possible Soviet advances. From that position, they would

²⁷ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 101.

²⁸ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 35.

²⁹ CIA, *The World Situation Review*.

³⁰ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 78.

target an area the Allies were actually trying to defend, namely the eastern part of West Germany, home to 25% of the German population.³¹

The only apparent solution for this dilemma was to consider some previously untapped resources. The High Commissioner in Germany, John J. McCloy, suggested that there could not be any effective Western European defense system without utilizing German resources and manpower.³² Every effort had to be made in order to “permit going forward with our immediate objective of strengthening European defense by closer integration and securing the earliest possible contribution of German resources.”³³ The integration of Germany into a European defense system also served two other purposes. It could prevent Germany from once again abusing their power for aggression towards its neighbors and was also pivotal for the European unification.³⁴

Considering the reports about Russian mobilization and Stalin’s clear signals in Asia by supporting the Korean War, the United States could not afford to waste any time. Since the European Allies had already signaled reluctance to ramp up their efforts, the United States decided for a ‘stick and carrot’ approach. They sold the German rearmament as a package deal with a stronger US commitment in Europe. The United States offered to provide a commander for the European NATO forces (Supreme Allied Commander Europe: SACEUR), to increase financial aid, to integrate allied forces into a common defense system, and provide more troops.³⁵ At the same time, however, Acheson made clear that in exchange for this increase in aid, the Europeans had to accept the idea of German rearmament immediately.³⁶ What appeared

³¹ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 10.

³² Trachtenberg and Gehrz, *America, Europe, and German Rearmament*, 20.

³³ US Department of State, *Telegram No. 4215* (Department of State, Nov. 20, 1950.) Document is now declassified.

³⁴ CIA, *The World Situation Review*.

³⁵ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 27.

³⁶ Trachtenberg and Gehrz, *America, Europe, and German Rearmament*, 1.

to the Europeans to be fairly rough treatment was serving a hidden agenda though: it was meant to bring the French and Germans together; a prerequisite for a successful European policy.³⁷

Under this pressure from the United States and enticed by the incentives, the Europeans eventually produced their own initiative. They suggested joining their efforts in a European Defense Community (EDC). This demanded that each member state relinquish some of its sovereignty over their committed forces. It also entailed allowing German rearmament, however, under the premise that those forces would be completely detached from German control and fully integrated into the EDC. This was to prevent any abuse of German military power for regaining nationalistic ambitions.

The United States initially showed some satisfaction with its European partner's efforts but clearly misjudged the impact of different nationalities and social aversions amongst its Allies.³⁸ Giving up that much sovereignty and making concessions with regards to the inherently national affair of military posture is even today, 60 years later, far from achievable. France, especially, was not ready to give up a superior position in Europe. Its fear of an immediate physical attack was far less than the ramifications of losing its leadership position on the continent. This is one part of inter-European policy Acheson clearly failed to recognize.³⁹ Beyond the ambition to assume the leading role in Europe, there was also the ever present fear of a reemerging hostile Germany. This fear of Germany, taking over control from within, once they became part of the EDC, could not be masked by any American diplomatic effort. The problems with the EDC were rooted much deeper than either the

³⁷ Trachtenberg and Gehrz, *America, Europe, and German Rearmament*, 4.

³⁸ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 136-8.

³⁹ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 53.

Europeans or Americans were able to comprehend at the time and footed on the states' nationalism.⁴⁰

Even though the United States had to assume a more assertive role and bluntly threaten the Europeans with termination of its support in case the EDC failed, the long term vision was still focused on a united Europe, strong enough to fend for itself with minimal support from America. Dulles was convinced that a European defense system could only work if built on a solid French-German partnership.⁴¹

The United States and Germany: A practical relationship emerges

The bilateral relationship between the United States and Germany was based on the American conviction that the former aggressor held the key to economic prosperity and military security in Europe. The resources and industrial capability of the *Ruhrgebiet* as well as manpower, military reputation, and geographical position made it an indispensable factor in rebuilding the European security system. Primed with this predilection, the war in Korea tipped the scale for the United States to pursue German rearmament. By the time the United States realized that the conflict in Asia was not the anticipated Russian diversion to serve as a prelude to further hostilities in Europe, they had already settled on the idea of including the Federal Republic. Hence, the question of German rearmament became separated from the original idea that it was a mere product of the Korean War.⁴²

On the other hand, not every actor shared American enthusiasm for rearming Germany. The CIA estimated that up to that point the US monopoly on nuclear weapons had preserved peace, but by 1951 the odds were better than fifty-fifty that the Russians would not tolerate unilateral German rearmament.⁴³ Based on this threat assessment, the

⁴⁰ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 227.

⁴¹ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 121.

⁴² McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 25.

⁴³ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 111.

discussion began to revolve around a strategy to convince the US authorities of the benefits of this approach as well as the German population to once again pick up their arms, this time, however, under the control and regulation of the Western powers.

During a Supreme Headquarter Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE) briefing in July 1951, the SACEUR, General Alfred Gruenther, laid out the detailed explanation of the military position to Senator Henry Lodge Jr. from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In his speech he explained, "The German potential is of the greatest military importance to a final solution of the Western European defense problem. We are convinced that there is no realistic defense of Western Europe, including Western Germany, without some form of German participation...it would be anomalous if the Allies were called upon to defend Germany and at the same time deny the Germans the right to defend their own soil."⁴⁴ In addition, considerations had to be given to the fact that the Germans obviously had quite some experience in fighting the Russians.⁴⁵ Although appearing cynical, this fact was certainly considered, at least by the military.

Those arguments were without a doubt convincing for pragmatically thinking Americans, but would they persuade Germans to arm again and contribute to the common defense of Europe and their own country? A lot of Germans had family and friends in the eastern part of the country and were more interested in a reunified than rearmed Germany. Under those circumstances, a Russian offer to provide just that under neutral terms might be too tempting to forfeit which would cause a significant blow to the US plans by pulling Germany and its resources to the Russian side.⁴⁶ Besides this threat, US policy makers

⁴⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *SHAPE Briefings for Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (US Department of Defense, July 1951) Document is now declassified.

⁴⁵ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 22.

⁴⁶ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 128.

realized that the Federal Republic would only “cooperate as an ally if defended like an ally.” Using the country’s territory as a buffer zone would most likely not be suitable to convince the population of one’s good intentions. Therefore, defending West German territory had to be considered in drafting a corresponding strategy.⁴⁷ Concerning the political and military status of Germany and its future armed forces, there were two distinct possibilities to deal with the country: in order to extract contributions from Germany, the sovereignty of the other European countries’ military could be reduced to the Federal Republic’s level or Germany’s degree of sovereignty could be adjusted to that of the other NATO members.⁴⁸ While the State Department supported the first approach, the Army favored the second and received support from the High Commissioner in Germany. McCoy profited from his connections within the country, hence had a better feel for what might convince the German population to pull their weight. He suggested that “discriminatory or restrictive notes against Germany must be avoided in formulating plans and modus operandi of integrated forces for defense of Europe and emphasis placed upon principles applicable to all participating countries.”⁴⁹

Germany itself and especially its savvy Chancellor Adenauer noticed the increasing emphasis on the necessity to draw them under the NATO umbrella and secure their resources. With some political maneuvering, he figured it should be possible to regain some sovereignty regarding external and internal affairs in exchange for a military contribution.⁵⁰ Considering the events just five years prior, this was a quite remarkable development which would have vast implication for the

⁴⁷ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 102.

⁴⁸ Trachtenberg and Gehrz, *America, Europe, and German Rearmament*, 13.

⁴⁹ US Department of State, *Telegram No. 4215*.

⁵⁰ CIA, *The World Situation Review*.

recovery and reintegration process of Germany and subsequently the European defense system.

NATO: The new alliance in its infancy

Early NATO policy was a reflection of and determined by US policy. The United States would develop a strategy and NATO would agree to adjust its doctrine accordingly. Considering the massive economic and military aid America was pumping into its European Allies' countries, this mechanism was not surprising. The weaponry itself was also highly welcomed by the Europeans especially since the nuclear weapon heavy approach was "demanding little and providing much."⁵¹ Therefore, it didn't require too much arm twisting to introduce the strategy of massive retaliation into NATO and adopting it as the predominant doctrine. At the time the detailed plan for the European defense included a European ground force supported by tactical airpower and backed by the untouchable US strategic air and sea power providing a deterrent element in the background.⁵² To bolster the conventional arm of this strategy, new resources had to be found.

Again in line with US demands, the Alliance agreed to rearm Germany at the very next meeting in September 1950, shortly after hostilities in Korea began.⁵³ The sheer need for more troops, but also the agreement that Germans would fight harder for their own country than allied forces for some occupied territory that formerly belonged to the Nazis, were convincing arguments. However, with regard to the desired integration of German troops, the strategies at the time had one major flaw: the plan foresaw a withdrawal from Germany as well as Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg in the face of a Russian onslaught.⁵⁴ This

⁵¹ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 8.

⁵² McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 9.

⁵³ Hilsman, *NATO: The Developing Strategic Context*, 18.

⁵⁴ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 11.

hardly motivating fact and the need for a geographical defense line east of the Rhine called for another modification of NATO's doctrine.

Forward defense was the next idea that was supposed to solve the problems of geography and motivation and stop the Soviets with conventionally equipped armed force. Although this strategy was again in line with US papers, due to the Allies' insufficient conventional strength it was never implemented.⁵⁵ Instead, NATO once again relied on its nuclear capability using the weapons as the sword and conventional forces as a shield. However, their main purpose was more a tripwire effect along the iron curtain causing a massive nuclear retaliation in case of attack.⁵⁶ Conventionally, the Allies did not provide much of a shield, though, and lagged far behind the original plan. They were hardly capable of stopping any attack east of the Rhine, a fact, that caused the German chancellor quite some headaches having to sell the strategy to a population that was still reluctant to rearm.⁵⁷

Eventually, the European Allies agreed that only Germany as part of NATO would bring the desired benefits of close control of their force, convincing incentive for the country itself, and effective use of Germany's military capabilities. The Federal Republic would not be allowed, however, to build its own nuclear weapons, a condition the West European Union (WEU) would be in charge of enforcing.⁵⁸ The Allies insisted that Chancellor Adenauer sign a respective declaration. This declaration of abolishing nuclear aspirations was seen as a prerequisite for NATO-membership as well as sovereignty for the Federal Republic.⁵⁹ The wording of the declaration and Adenauer's view of the security

⁵⁵ Mark Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 5.

⁵⁶ The strategy was labeled MC14/2. Mark Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 7.

⁵⁷ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 28.

⁵⁸ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 127.

⁵⁹ Matthias Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb: German Politics and the Nuclear Option* (London, Boulder, Colo.: Pluto Press, 1995) 2.

situation in Europe with regards to nuclear weapons became part of future discussions within Germany as well as within the Alliance.

Nuclear weapons were the predominant topic in 1950s NATO strategies. Not only its vast destructive power but also economic benefits made it a tempting weapon. While the military leadership, like DSACEUR Montgomery in late 1954, tried to provide a convincing deterrence posture by stating: “Not we may use them but we will use them”, the political leaders were always looking to take advantage of this weapon in order to reduce conventional forces.⁶⁰ The intense pressure to build a conventional force at the outbreak of the Korean War declined after the death of Stalin and in 1956 the Allies were once again reducing their commitment.⁶¹ At this point, Germany began to rearm and attempt to fill the gap the Allies had left.

Germany: Realpolitik a la Adenauer

After electing their own government in 1949 and with their economy picking up speed, the situation for West Germany appeared to be rapidly improving. However, the population and its newly elected government were well aware that not only their neighbors had a legitimate case in calling for their participation in a European security system. For their own interest, they had to pay close attention to the security situation for the western part of Germany with regards to their immediate eastern neighbor and its protector in Moscow. Apart from the general situation in Central Europe, the elected officials in Germany (government and opposition alike) had ideas about how to realize the rearmament of the Federal Republic that differed, at times significantly, from the population’s thoughts. This was especially apparent with regards to nuclear weapons.

⁶⁰ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 79.

⁶¹ Hans Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War; The Views of German Military and Political Leaders* (Evanston, Ill., Row, Peterson, 1957) 12.

Security issues and rearmament

Germany realized early on that it would not be strong enough to fend for itself.⁶² The threat perception was slightly different than their future Allies'. A major concern was the Soviet menace, especially with the pictures of atrocities committed against and by the Russians still fresh in almost every generation's memory. Another likely scenario appeared to be a civil war like engagement with East Germany. With North Korea's attack on its southerly neighbor, parallels to Germany and its heavily armed neighbor were immediately drawn. Chancellor Adenauer was convinced a similar Russian plan existed for Germany.⁶³

The problem of finding an agreeable consensus for a rearmed Germany existed amongst the Allies and within the German authorities alike. Kurt Schumacher from the opposing *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) demanded that international relations with Germany had to be reconsidered and a strong offensive force emplaced.⁶⁴ The general attitude was that Germany should be treated more like an equal and the rearmament problem had to be part of a greater package including other political issues like sovereignty and reunification.⁶⁵

With the political and security situation as complicated as it was and also influenced by diametrically opposed powers in the West and the East, the question of reunification and sovereignty seemed to be mutually exclusive.⁶⁶ Even with a reinstated German military, the national territory was likely to become the future battlefield and reunification was probably put off for a while. But, over time, Germany also realized that it had some bargaining capacity with the Allies who were at the time neither willing nor capable of providing a significant military force. Germany was also willing to use this bargaining chip in

⁶² Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 143.

⁶³ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 23-4.

⁶⁴ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 102-3.

⁶⁵ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 113.

⁶⁶ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 109.

order to gain military and political equality rather than being wasted as cannon fodder.⁶⁷ In addition, rearmament was not necessarily viewed as an end in itself but rather a means to motivate the Allies to provide more troops and therefore improve security for the Federal Republic.⁶⁸

Eventually this strategy payed off and West Germany was recognized as a sovereign power within NATO. In order to achieve this goal, Germany did not even have to take a single practical step on its own towards rearmament. The Allies provided the labor by trying to gain a more favorable position themselves without having to pay too much for a common defense system. The first German soldiers were drafted in January 1956 and by the end of that year the Bundeswehr had 96,000 men under arms.⁶⁹ But even with the proclaimed goal of 500,000 soldiers, it was made very clear to German politicians that a Soviet assault would demand an immediate response with nuclear weapons. General Gruenther explained this strategy in detail to a defense expert delegation from the SPD in 1956, leaving the impression that the German soldiers were indeed just bait for Soviet troops to attract an adequate target for a nuclear response.⁷⁰ Therefore, for Germany, the discussion about its role within the Alliance was not finished with the rearmament of its military forces. Strategy, as well as the kind of weaponry, conventional or nuclear, had to be revisited. The government and the population had already begun to diverge on those issues.

The German government and Adenauer

Adenauer's basic premise was that an equal load carried by Germany should be rewarded with being treated as an equal. With this Quid pro Quo mentality, he was determined to extract as great a political benefit for Germany as possible. He was convinced that Germany's

⁶⁷ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 50-1.

⁶⁸ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 18.

⁶⁹ Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War*, 9.

⁷⁰ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 32.

security needs could only be met by integrating it into a western Alliance, hence membership in NATO. During this initial phase, he was the dominant policy maker in Germany, single-handedly determining the country's fate.⁷¹

For Germany's military contribution, he demanded that German territory would not automatically become the battle ground in case of a confrontation with the East.⁷² Furthermore, the new German forces were not to be regarded as mere mercenaries but should receive the same equipment as their European partners. The structure and share of leadership positions was also to be adjusted according to German contributions.⁷³ Early on during the discussion of a German rearmament, Adenauer sent his advisor, Herbert Blankenhorn to America to pass on the message to the US President that "Germany did not want to take her place in an American army but was happy with a European solution even with a French commander."⁷⁴

Regarding Adenauer's general view on US defense strategy, he was certainly not always satisfied with the signals he received from Washington. He did not believe that the New Look, for example, met German security requirements to the degree he had envisioned. During the process of negotiating to accept a rearmed Germany into NATO, Adenauer was aiming for a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons. His three-pronged approach for a strategy foresaw the use of: 1. Nuclear weapons for deterrence, 2. Conventional capabilities to hold enemy troops on the ground, and 3. A reserve force in case nuclear weapons were not used and the fight remained conventional.⁷⁵ Subsequently, the US plan to further reduce its conventional forces in 1956 was disliked by the German Chancellor. His comments referring to this plan, dubbed the

⁷¹ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 138.

⁷² McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 20.

⁷³ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 72.

⁷⁴ Trachtenberg and Gehrz, *America, Europe, and German Rearmament*, 5.

⁷⁵ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 23.

Redford Plan, were telling when he stated, “As to the debate which was started by Americans about the relationship between conventional and nuclear weapons, I would like to stress that I regard shifting the principal emphasis to atomic weapons at the present time as a mistake.”⁷⁶ Watching the Americans shifting their military composition towards a nuclear dominated force must have raised the question for Adenauer of where this would leave Germany. Subsequently shifting German defense strategy towards nuclear weapons would most certainly be an even harder sell to the German population than conventional rearmament.

The opposition in the Bundestag positioned itself to play on this popular resentment of a rearmed Germany. The criticism was, in general, questioning whether a German contribution would add anything to the security of the Federal Republic at all.⁷⁷ Questions were also raised about specific details like the timing of the negotiations when, in the SPD’s view, the focus should really be on striving for reunification.⁷⁸ Even beyond this point, the SPD viewed NATO’s strategy as flawed and had serious concerns when the highly acclaimed exercise Battle Royal demonstrated that in case of a nuclear exchange, a large portion of German territory would be devastated and losses of civilian population plainly disregarded.⁷⁹

German society rearmed: The population’s take

The German population did not share Adenauer’s unlimited, pro-western attitude. It did share his security mindedness, however, from a vastly different perspective. The still relatively fresh memories of the last war included the horrific experiences of Russian atrocities at the end, which shaped their security consciousness. This fear of Russian

⁷⁶ Bulletin of the Press and Information Office of the German federal government (German ed.), August 21, 1956, in Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War*, 15.

⁷⁷ Ollenhauer in Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 31.

⁷⁸ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 73.

⁷⁹ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 25.

repercussions was expressed in the “*Ohne mich!*” (Without me!) attitude with regard to German rearmament. The resentment was made visible during a poll showing that 67% of the German population did not support rearmament. The blame for this policy, however, was not only attributed to the German government but to the US policy as well. The attempt to rearm Germany five years after the United States had disarmed the country was seen as a selfish way to preserve American security and an apparent sign of cynical self-mindedness on the part of the United States.⁸⁰

The cleavage between the German government’s policy, which was predominantly Adenauer’s, and public opinion grew centering on the question of military issues. Adenauer had to struggle in order to convince the population to choose security with the West over their own national reunification. He proclaimed that “no one can now argue any longer that the German people’s attitude to the treaties and the defense contribution is negative.”⁸¹ This perception was glossing over the fact, though, that the German population was well aware of its security needs; however, it did remain skeptical towards the military in general and nuclear weapons in particular; an attitude that would be the basis for major controversies in the following decades.

Germany and the nuclear temptation

Germany and nuclear weapons were certainly not love at first sight. Adenauer was especially struggling with the heavy handed approach of massive retaliation and the American policy of the New Look. At the time, the most likely scenario in his view was a conflict with East Germany; a conflict that could not possibly be answered by a nuclear response.⁸² In this context, the German government assumed that NATO’s tactical nuclear weapons were only a temporary means to

⁸⁰ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 68-9.

⁸¹ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 20.

⁸² Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War*, 16.

overcome conventional shortcomings rather than permanently replacing a non-nuclear capability. The perception was that sooner rather than later the Alliance would fall back to a conventional option.⁸³

Despite those initial reservations, Adenauer did note the immense political value of nuclear weapons as well. Nuclear weapons were viewed as prestige enhancing means to gain international influence. Adenauer certainly saw that in order to gain and later on maintain more power within Europe, Germany would have to deal with the question of nuclear weapons. When, in 1956, he realized that German influence was still lagging behind its neighboring Allies, he drew the conclusion that only a more potent military and production of nuclear weapons could rectify this situation.⁸⁴

Not only was his own population less than enthusiastic about nuclear weapons, Germany's neighbors and the United States did not support Adenauer's nuclear aspirations. As a matter of fact, the German Chancellor had to publicly renounce pursuing nuclear weapons. But this statement soon became a matter of wording. When Adenauer, the savvy politician that he was, had to publicly give up the pursuit of nuclear weapons in general in 1952, he declared in October 1954 merely "that the FRG pledges that it will not produce atomic, biological or chemical weapons anywhere within its borders."⁸⁵ Although similar in wording, this statement only renounced the production within Germany but not the possession of nuclear weapons. It also omitted any reference to civil nuclear research, material storage, and possession. There was also not a passage about prohibiting production abroad. The French government took note of these discrepancies and voiced some concern,

⁸³ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 36.

⁸⁴ Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, Matthias Kuentzel has meticulously researched the German government's attitude towards nuclear weapons and will be cited frequently in this paragraph about Chancellor Adenauer's government, 5.

⁸⁵ Adenauer in Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, 2.

especially since with this statement made in 1954 Germany met the requirement to join NATO.⁸⁶

Those concerns, however, did not last long and following the predominant policy of Realpolitik of the post war era, three years later France offered Germany cooperation in building a joint nuclear program. The newly appointed German Secretary of State Franz Josef Strauss immediately followed the invitation to build and test a nuclear weapon on French soil.⁸⁷ Strauss was the perfect match for Adenauer in his often unfiltered enthusiasm for American power politics and summed up what Adenauer must have suspected for a while, “Power today is military power. Military power today is atomic power. Without atomic armaments, Germans will supply only the bakers and the kitchen boys for the forces of the other allies. And with such a role, the future of Germany is decided.”⁸⁸ Strauss and this attitude towards nuclear weapons and the United States would become one of the defining elements of German politics in the following decades.

The Western European Allies: A struggle for peace and position

The main economic and political actors within Europe were the two European occupying forces, Great Britain and France. Both shared the fate of being a former Empire struggling to manage the remains of their former territories and at the same time position themselves in a changing European environment. Economic shortcomings and subsequent unwillingness and lack of capacity to provide for their own security, they had to accept the American position of rearming Germany. This was viewed as the price the Europeans had to pay in order for the United States to maintain a supreme commander for NATO in Europe and a substantial force to provide for European security.⁸⁹ The

⁸⁶ Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, 4.

⁸⁷ Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, 8.

⁸⁸ Strauss in Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, 14.

⁸⁹ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 108.

counterargument the Europeans brought up against rearming Germany was the complaint that not enough time had passed since the end of WWII. The still fragile democratic system in Germany might be strangled under the load of premature militarism and the economic burden of providing armed forces.⁹⁰ Considering that Germany's economy at the time was mainly dependent on the limits the European neighbors imposed on it, this argument was easily dismissed.

The common ground

The Europeans not only agreed that a German rearmament was probably unavoidable, but that the Germans actually had to be won over to contribute military forces rather than being kept disarmed. However, Great Britain was not willing to give in to that idea without assuring that a centralized control was in place to monitor the emerging German armed forces.⁹¹ Another worrying factor was that the pro-western attitude of the German government almost entirely relied on its Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Wondering how long he might hold out, they were not ready to buy into the new German western-friendly policy too quickly.⁹² Other opposing arguments were the fear of burdening Germany with additional costs while at the same time Germany, without this additional burden, might become too strong of an economic power. Particularly France's and Britain's empire-mindedness could hardly live with a strong German economic power and also increasing political prosperity while they were drained of resources to defend German territory.⁹³

⁹⁰ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 32.

⁹¹ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 114.

⁹² Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 106.

⁹³ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 30.

While the Europeans were grappling with these dichotomies, the Soviet Union had time to strengthen its nuclear and political position while weakening NATO's cohesion.⁹⁴

The British position

The British position towards a rearmed Germany was dictated by US policies. Desperately dependent on US support, they grudgingly had to agree to a US commander under whom their forces would serve. But since Europe was only considered one out of many theaters, the Empire had to accept compromises. Therefore, they also played along with the American preference for a European defense system as suggested by the French. After the French themselves abolished this idea, Prime Minister Churchill candidly admitted that American arm twisting had dictated his enthusiasm for the EDC. He stated that he was actually glad the EDC had finally failed to be implemented since the only reason he had agreed on it was that President Eisenhower had liked it.⁹⁵

Aside from the discussions about an increase in conventional commitments, the British decided early on to provide an economically feasible solution for their security needs and detonated a nuclear weapon in 1952, marking the beginning of an independent nuclear weapons program. Implemented after the unfavorable outcome of the Suez-crisis in 1956, the newly gained nuclear capability allowed for another reduction in conventional forces and a more relaxed view of the European security situation.⁹⁶

France and German rearmament: Between imperialism and fear

France's position was even more precarious due to additional internal division. By now the general threat perception was less focused on a possible Russian threat and more on a reemerging great power next door. The idea that an economically strong Germany would gain even

⁹⁴ Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War*, 9.

⁹⁵ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 115-6.

⁹⁶ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 7.

more influence by adding superior armed forces was unacceptable. Besides, the sense of urgency displayed by the United States for rearming Germany was not shared. After all, the Korean problem was not viewed as dramatically in Paris as it was in Washington.⁹⁷ However, just denying Germany military superiority did not mean that France was opposed to any German contribution. The conditions of such participation in a common European defense system had to be discussed first and significant resistance at home overcome. As a reassurance of a controlled German reentry into the armed community, France demanded that the United States deploy their forces to Germany first and NATO assume its responsibilities before any Germans were armed.⁹⁸

The German-French relations were meanwhile dominated by mutual animosities with both agreeing on proceedings and suggestions that were unacceptable for the other one. Movement towards new ideas and possible solutions were only provided under great pressure from the United States.⁹⁹ Under this pressure, French Prime Minister Pleven met with President Truman and suggested a plan for integrating German forces into a greater European system. In detail, the plan envisioned integrating small German units without a common staff which were insufficient to rejoin and form a greater German army and thereby preventing the revival of German military power. At the same time, this plan would allow tapping into German resources without giving Germany political equality. This piece-meal integration was supposed to guarantee that Germany could not pose any threat or gain power towards its western neighbor.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 53.

⁹⁸ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 108-9.

⁹⁹ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 112.

¹⁰⁰ White House, *Second WH meeting of Truman and French Prime Minister Pleven; issues discussed: German rearmament, the Soviet threat, French fighting in Indochina, French role in defense of Western Europe*, (Memorandum, Feb 6, 1951) Document is now declassified.

It remains questionable whether the French leader actually had the intention of presenting a viable plan or was trying to gain time to proceed with France's own rearmament.¹⁰¹ Whatever the reason, the American President indicated that he was willing to proceed with the suggested plan. Anxious to see results with regards to his European Allies' military contribution, he urged the French to proceed expeditiously.¹⁰²

The plan was integrated into the proposed EDC, a plan that the French designed to integrate German military contribution while limiting German power as much as possible. Upon French insistence, the treaty defined Germany as a 'strategically exposed area' subsequently enabling NATO to refuse to license heavy armament industry and especially nuclear weapon plants in that area.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, despite massive threats from the United States, the French National Assembly failed to ratify the Treaty forcing the French to accept Germany joining NATO. The rationale behind this agreement was explained by French Prime Minister Mendes-France who realized that: first, Germany would not pose a threat with strong US and European forces in place; second, France would protect itself by starting its own nuclear program, and finally, the idea of Germany integrated into a strong NATO began to sound more appealing than the Federal Republic within a weaker EDC that could be taken over by a reemerging, strong Germany.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

The motivation to rearm Germany was owed to a combination of economic, political, and military necessities only five years after the end of WWII. The degree to which either one of those elements impacted the

¹⁰¹ McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question*, 66.

¹⁰² White House, *Second WH meeting of Truman and French Prime Minister Pleven*.

¹⁰³ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, xviii.

¹⁰⁴ Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace*, 116.

involved countries' policy varied greatly though and already demonstrated where the fault lines not only within the transatlantic relationship but also within Europe would develop and persist for the following next several decades. While all actors realized the need for cooperation in order to exploit the limited resources for a defense of Western Europe against the Eastern Bloc, none of them fully appreciated the impact of nationalism and internal pressures within their partners' countries. The result was a tug-of-war between the occupation forces from which Germany was clearly left as the greatest beneficiary.

For the United States, the question of German rearmament was elevated to the highest priority due to the Korean War. The attack on the southern part of the Korean peninsula was viewed as a Soviet attempt to draw US forces away from the European theater in preparation for a communist onslaught across the German border. After significant reductions following the end of WWII, the American conventional forces were vastly outnumbered by their Russian opponents, forcing the United States to increase the pressure on its European partners to ramp up their efforts, to develop a viable nuclear deterrence strategy, to counter conventional shortcomings in a cost-effective way, and tap into German resources by rearming the country.

Germany itself was not enthusiastic about rearming. The memories of the previous war and fear of provoking Russia unnecessarily were predominant. Besides, the population's mind was more focused on reunification; a large part still had family and friends in the Eastern part of the divided country. A premature rearmament was seen as limiting the chances of finding a political solution to end the separation. The government, mainly Chancellor Adenauer, viewed the issue of rearmament from a more realist standpoint. Adenauer was certainly aware of the exposed situation of Germany as the front line in case of a major war in Europe. He also watched the political maneuvering of Germany's neighbors and their growing desire to extract German military

contributions. Aware that Germany could hardly survive without being integrated into the western defense systems, he attempted to use the Allies' needs for German resources to extract the maximum political gains for his country.

The European Allies, mainly France and Britain, were in no position to dismiss the American demand to rearm Germany. Economic and military dependencies limited their negotiating leverage vis a vis the United States. Besides, for both of the former Empires the European theater was only one of many. France, for example, was seriously bogged down in the Algerian war by 1955 and had to withdraw forces from its NATO commitment in Europe.¹⁰⁵ Both nations also saw the economic advantage of nuclear weapons to substitute for the lack of conventional forces and engaged in their own nuclear programs.

The debate about the employment and usefulness of nuclear weapons for Germany was certainly one that occupied the government as discussions in the German Bundestag showed. The Adenauer government saw its new Allies' lacking conventional commitment and the ramping up of their own nuclear programs. He quickly recognized the political and military might of the new weapons. However, his population vastly disagreed on this topic. The cleavage between the German authorities and population, and societal apprehension towards basing, production, and ownership of nuclear weapons not only influenced the quarrels over the utility of the military within the country, but also determined the attitude of the German population towards the United States in the following decades.

¹⁰⁵ David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria: 1956-1958*, (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 2006) 11.

Chapter 3

Nuclear Aspirations: Germany between Great Power and Security Considerations

After successful rearmament and NATO-membership negotiations, the focus of the German government began to shift towards the integration of nuclear power (civilian and military). Based on the security and geopolitical situation described in the previous two chapters, the Federal Republic began to assess more closely the political and military value of this new weapon. While the demand for equal equipment of the new armed forces in Germany was already part of the negotiations leading up to a German military contribution, Germany now began to specifically ask for nuclear participation and even considered an independent nuclear program. David Kirkpatrick Este Bruce, American Ambassador to Germany at the time, summarized the rationale for such ambitions to be, "...British and anticipated French acquisition, doubts about US military presence on the continent, uncertainty of US reaction to local attacks, increasing desire for more independence of the United States, feeling nuclear weapons are necessary attributes of modern sovereignty, effect on the Federal Republic's thinking if disarmament stalemate continued, etc."¹

Hence, the United States was well aware of the increasing doubts about their commitment, the very basis of the European-American security arrangement. The United States' failure to eradicate those doubts plaguing its Allies was eventually considered one of the main reasons France withdrew its forces from the NATO command structure.²

¹ Department of State, *Telegram from Ambassador Bruce, Bonn, to Secretary of State*, (Department of State: Telegram No. 2704, February 28 1958), 1. Document is now declassified.

² Halliday in Steve Breyman, *Why Movements Matter : The West German Peace Movement and U.S. Arms Control Policy* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2001), 4.

Considering that the United States was neither willing to nor capable of sending more troops to Europe, the options for US policy appeared to be limited: If the US did spread nuclear capabilities amongst its Allies, this might entice them to develop their own independent strategy, hence removing those weapons from US control, and if they withheld nuclear weapons those very Allies might decide to go it alone.³

Germany was certainly watching this development very closely and realized how powerful those weapons were, or at least perceived by its neighbors. The question for the German government was, therefore, not if it should get involved in nuclear developments, but how. After abolishing the quest for independent production during the NATO-membership negotiations, a promising approach was to achieve control over weapons already within Germany or at least within Europe. If this turned out to be unsuccessful, at a minimum, participation through involvement in the nuclear planning process had to be gained.⁴

The bottom line was that Germany felt the need to get involved in the nuclear debate because only some sort of control through the planning process, whether physical or perceived, was preventing it from losing political significance. Its status to become the leading European industrial power was in jeopardy by losing its voice in international matters. This was the Nuclear Age after all!⁵

On its journey from nuclear sharing to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and finally NATO's double track doctrine, the German government was also struggling with a growing internal problem: the increasing democratic assertiveness of its population making ample use of its right to openly voice its dissatisfaction with the government's nuclear policy.

³ Matthias Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb : German Politics and the Nuclear Option* (London ; Boulder, Colo.: Pluto Press, 1995), 18.

⁴ Christoph Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1995), 56.

⁵ John N Zedler, *The Multilateral Force: A Misreading of German Aspirations* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1968), 25.

Losing the struggle for nuclear control

The United States Government had no intention whatsoever of permitting dissemination. The United States might be a new country in many respects but they were as old as Methuselah on nuclear matters. They could never contemplate having their enormous strategic power touched off by another country in the Alliance.

Dean Rusk, 1964

If the United States never intended to share control over nuclear weapons, how did Germany so grossly misperceive the underlying US strategy? The development following the *Bundestagsbeschluss* to equip the *Bundeswehr* with nuclear capable weapons showed that Germany initially had a promising agenda and also reasons to believe that it could indeed gain at least limited control over some of the nuclear weapons stationed in Europe. This agenda ultimately failed, though, reconfirming Germany's non-nuclear power status by agreeing to the terms of the NPT.

Acquiring the hardware

Germany's reasons for considering the deployment of nuclear weapons were fairly plausible in the late 50s, as nuclear ownership became closely related to prestige, influence, status, and security. Germany's Foreign Minister, Dr. Heinrich von Brentano, reconfirmed in a meeting with US Secretary of State Murphy that Germany indeed did not want to procure ABC weapons, but would like to be involved in nuclear research. Concerning control of nuclear weapons, he was convinced that NATO should have it and the decision to employ those weapons a decision by all. "If the possession of nuclear weapons is confined only to some countries, other countries will want to produce weapons, which will then be outside of control of NATO."⁶ Beyond this statement, von Brentano felt that the fact that only some countries could unilaterally

⁶ Department of State, *Minutes of a Meeting between the Secretary of State and the German Foreign Minister* (Department of State: November 21, 1957), 5. Document is now declassified.

defend themselves might foster discriminatory feelings within the Alliance. Non-nuclear states would also be exposed to possible Russian attacks, once singled out as such.⁷

The stage was set for nuclear weapons on German soil, but the plans of how to continue differed between the United States and Germany. Nevertheless, after the *Bundestagsbeschluss* in 1958, the German government had opened the door for the *Bundeswehr* to receive short range nuclear delivery vehicles and nuclear battlefield weapons in accordance with NATO plan MC 70. Even though the warheads remained under strict American control, it is reasonable to assume that Germany was holding out hope of eventually gaining a higher degree of control over those weapons.⁸ The United States, of course, was watching the German appetite for nuclear capable weapon systems. Even when the German Defense Secretary Strauss put the new F-104 Starfighter on his shopping list, the United States never considered giving up control of the weapons the jet was capable of carrying.⁹

The Multilateral Nuclear Force

In the late 50s and early 60s, Germany stepped up its campaign to gain more influence over the employment of nuclear weapons. With France and Britain ramping up their nuclear programs and Russia gaining a stronger nuclear strategic posture, Germany seemed to have ample reason to join the nuclear club. First, there was the ever present fear of a Russian attack that became even more prevalent considering that Germany was the weakest link within the Alliance. Secondly, its immediate western neighbors were openly promoting nuclear research, and finally, an increased influence over US policy with regards to

⁷ Department of State, *Minutes of a Meeting* 1957, 13.

⁸ Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy*, 40.

⁹ Mr. Timmons, United States Government, to Mr. Menahant, United States Government, *Office Memorandum concerning the Atomic Armament of Germany* (United States Government: 25 November 1958). Document is now declassified.

Germany's security was certainly another viable goal.¹⁰ At a time when the US commitment to defend its European Allies was openly questioned across Europe, Germany did not want to be left behind. The Russian capability to strike America's homeland had not improved the faith in extended deterrence. Politically, Germany did not want to be discriminated against in the face of both British and French Great Power aspirations founded on nuclear power.¹¹

The Americans, for their part, contributed to the feeling within the German government that achieving their nuclear goals was possible and would be supported by their transatlantic partner. Although Washington did not explicitly make any offers to Germany itself, it did give "strong hints that it would be prepared to transfer advanced technology to a multilateral European production consortium, offering the European members of NATO a means of securing direct physical control over the future deployment of Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBM)." ¹² Out of this initial idea, the plan for a Multilateral Nuclear Force (MLNF) arose. Early discussions between Germany's Foreign Minister von Brentano and US Secretary of State Murphy centered on location of deployment, political will of European countries to base them, financing, and preparation of the future sites including training of personnel.¹³ Germany was very forthcoming in solving both financial and manning problems. However, its European neighbors were far less enthusiastic about the program.¹⁴

¹⁰ Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, 13.

¹¹ Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy*, 53.

¹² Susanna Scharfetter, Stephen Robert Twigge, and NetLibrary Inc., *Avoiding Armageddon Europe, the United States, and the Struggle for Nuclear Nonproliferation, 1945-1970* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 134.

¹³ Department of State, *Minutes of a Meeting 1957*, 15.

¹⁴ Germany agreed to provide for 40% of the costs and was also convinced that the maritime solution, giving consideration to possible Russian protest to the force being stationed on German soil, was the most viable one. Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, 36.

While these detailed discussions demonstrated the positive German attitude towards the project, the matter of final control authority was never addressed to German satisfaction. US intentions and German planning diverged greatly over the question of who would have their finger on the trigger. The United States had intended to provide its NATO Allies with a voice in nuclear strategy by appeasing Germany, hence preventing it from pursuing its own nuclear program, and reigning in the increasingly independent French nuclear program. Acknowledging Germany's exposed situation, this MLNF was intended to provide it with a more equal status compared to its neighbors.¹⁵

Germany, on the other hand, was hoping that over time they would gain more control over those weapons, hence bolster security considerations as well as prestige and status by diminishing the French and British independent programs.¹⁶ The MLNF-program ran into serious trouble when it became clear that the only participants left were Germany and the US. Germany, with its large share of the financial and personnel burden, would have been well on its way to becoming a nuclear power. Britain was not only aware of this fact but could also not see any benefit in sharing control, hence the status and prestige that comes with it, over those weapons. Especially when considering its own nuclear program, there was no reason to share all the perceived benefits of nuclear technology when they could have it all for themselves.¹⁷

In the end, the control issue was never resolved and even German enthusiasm eventually waned. With the reemergence of the NPT-discussion in the mid-60s, the MLNF-opponents gained more support and by 1966 the program was no longer important.¹⁸

¹⁵ Zedler, *The Multilateral Force*, 1-2.

¹⁶ Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy*, 95.

¹⁷ Schrafstetter, Twigge, and NetLibrary Inc., *Avoiding Armageddon*, 140.

¹⁸ Zedler, *The Multilateral Force*, 18.

Condemned to insignificance? Germany and the NPT

Multiple reasons caused the Allies, the United States in particular, and Russia to bring up the issue of limiting the spread of nuclear weapons in the 1960s. The main factor, though not officially stated, was certainly the fear of a nuclear-armed Germany. The governments in Britain, America, and Russia were equally concerned with the prospect of an industrially potent, politically sovereign, and militarily super charged West Germany.¹⁹ But, the Federal Republic was not the only country investigating the possibility of acquiring nuclear weapons. Great Britain and France had already initiated their nuclear programs and when China successfully detonated an atomic bomb in 1964, adding another member to the nuclear club, the pressure to negotiate a NPT was significant.²⁰ Following the Chinese test and the aborted attempt to provide the Europeans with some nuclear force through the MLNF in 1966, an agreement between the superpowers was quickly reached. By then, the idea of limiting nuclear weapons had been on the table for nearly ten years.²¹

The reactions towards an agreement on such limitations were fairly unanimous within the Western Alliance and Russia. Great Britain was going to benefit in numerous ways. First, a respective treaty would eliminate the threat of a reemerging Germany by prohibiting it from acquiring nuclear weapons. Secondly, by limiting Germany's power, it would effectively eliminate the country from competing with Great Britain for a Great Power status within Europe. Last but not least, even with Germany now rearmed, a limitation on the kind of weapons it was allowed to acquire began to define European post war power structures.²² The Soviet view of a NPT was fairly similar. Early on,

¹⁹ Schrafstetter, Twigge, and NetLibrary Inc., *Avoiding Armageddon*, 134.

²⁰ Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, 43.

²¹ Schrafstetter, Twigge, and NetLibrary Inc., *Avoiding Armageddon*, 163.

²² Schrafstetter, Twigge, and NetLibrary Inc., *Avoiding Armageddon*, 165.

Russia accepted the NPT as a control means aimed mainly at West Germany but also enhancing every de facto owner of nuclear weapons while degrading the political influence of any non-nuclear country.²³ By 1969 all European countries except France had signed the treaty, hence isolating Germany as the only non-nuclear country not to do so.²⁴

The German view was diametrically opposed to the Allies opinion and the Federal Republic brought up multiple reasonable objections to the NPT. Most issues were not immediately related to security problems but were political and economic in nature. In general, the perception was that the US proposed two-track system, suggesting obligatory controls for non-nuclear states and only voluntary ones for nuclear powers, would compromise the commercial interest of the non-nuclear signatories to the treaty. From the German's perspective those controls enabled spying on industrial secrets and also limited the utility of nuclear material. Overall, the system would significantly "impair the country's highly advanced and commercially competitive civil nuclear program."²⁵ The perceived discriminatory nature of the treaty also brought back historic traumas of an international stand-off with Great Britain in the early 20th century and memories of seemingly unjust treatments like Versailles, Yalta, and the Morgenthau plan.²⁶ Resentment against German limitation and degradation created hostile feelings amongst the various political parties and the public as well. The German population, generally opposed to nuclear weapons, started to see the NPT as yet another attempt by the strong powers to order the weaker ones to do as they say.²⁷ The German government was well aware of the public reception of a NPT as suggested by the other Allies and attempted to gain some benefits in return for its signature to the treaty. This

²³ Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy*, 160.

²⁴ Schrafstetter, Twigge, and NetLibrary Inc., *Avoiding Armageddon*, 193.

²⁵ Schrafstetter, Twigge, and NetLibrary Inc., *Avoiding Armageddon*, 183.

²⁶ Schrafstetter, Twigge, and NetLibrary Inc., *Avoiding Armageddon*, 188.

²⁷ Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, 91.

played on the fears that other countries held of a nuclear armed Germany. Secretary of State Gerhard Schroeder stated in 1963:

I think that some form of nuclear organization must be found which satisfies the security requirements of the non-atomically armed NATO members in the face of the more than 700 Soviet medium-range ballistic missiles aimed at Europe. If this can be achieved by the establishment of a multilateral atomic deterrence force of something similar, Germany could abstain from the acquisition of its own nuclear weapons vis-à-vis its allies. Should the Soviet Union be prepared, as we wish and hope it will be, to agree to take appreciable and irrevocable steps towards the reunification of Germany in freedom, this would make possible the accession of a unified Germany to a global agreement.

Schroeder in Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*,

Clearly, the threat of arming Germany with nuclear weapons hung in the air and the only way to avoid this situation would demand some concessions towards German reunification. But under isolation from all other nations and realizing that it would be held responsible if the NPT failed, Germany's resistance faltered after 1966.²⁸

By that time, Germany had clearly overextended its political power and even the United States, until then a close ally, supporting Germany's political struggle for influence in Europe, began to negotiate the treaty with Russia. Under pressure of other domestic issues, the political cohesion of the German government against the treaty began to fall apart and when Chancellor Erhard resigned, the resistance against signing the NPT had crumbled altogether. Now, under the shackles of the NPT, the challenge became how to prevent Germany from falling back to the status of a second rate political power within Europe. Simply complying with the treaty was not considered an option.²⁹ During the negotiations, Germany demanded that security issues were addressed and the responsibility for the safety of non-nuclear countries put in the hands of the nuclear powers. But more importantly, for the future international position of Germany, the rights and obligations of nuclear and non-

²⁸ Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy*, 166.

²⁹ Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, 69.

nuclear powers had to be balanced, while the peaceful use of nuclear energy had to be supported.³⁰ The lack of limits in this field left the Gaullists in France with a fairly uneasy feeling. They saw that Germany was setting up its industrial predominance in Europe while leaving a backdoor open for possible later military use of nuclear material.³¹

Signing the NPT marked the end of German aspiration for effective control or even possession of nuclear weapons and thus had to look for other ways to make up for the loss of influence in the nuclear arena. If direct control was not possible, at least it wanted to be involved in the planning process for the deployment of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear participation: The control placebo?

When Germany signed the NPT, which was perceived as a loss of political influence on the international stage, it also rid itself of numerous problems that would have probably proven insurmountable. Besides resistance within its own Alliance, a nuclear armed Germany would have been perceived as too offensive and unacceptable for Russia. But, Germany also began to analyze the true value of a so called independent nuclear program. Walter Lippmann, a columnist for *Der Spiegel*, argued that there is no such thing as an independent nuclear power other than the United States. He was pointing out that no other country could reasonably claim to be empowered to unilaterally make decisions regarding the employment of nuclear weapons in the face of 90% ownership of all weapons by the United States. It would better suit Germany to focus on increasing its influence by achieving political power through nuclear participation and consultation.³²

The idea of participating in the nuclear planning process dates back to 1959, when Defense Secretary Franz Josef Strauss requested

³⁰ Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy*, 167.

³¹ Küntzel, *Bonn & the Bomb*, 4.

³² Walter Lippmann, "Die Deutschen aus Misstrauen zum Narren Gehalten." *Der Spiegel*, no. 51 (December 1965): 32. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46275289.html>. (accessed 15 march 2011).

access to the relevant nuclear planning documents in order to achieve equality in nuclear considerations.³³ The actual NATO entity, coined the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) by US Secretary of Defense McNamara, was activated in 1965. One of the numerous tasks of its three branches, communications, data exchange, and planning, was the approval and planning for the use of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW). With this task, the NPG had a valuable means of providing a political signal of the Alliance's resolve to escalate a confrontation.³⁴ This was an application of nuclear power that Germany, with its nuclear capable platforms, could clearly relate to. The use of TNW was considered a political rather than military strategy. This enabled the Federal Republic to demonstrate the shift in the quality of a possible conflict with the Soviet Union and would also indicate that the Soviet Union might not remain a sanctuary.

Subsequently, in 1966, Ambassador Schnippenkoetter stated that "the objective of German policy is more effective participation in nuclear planning and consultation...."³⁵ Striving for increased influence through participation in the planning process would remain Germany's primary focus to make up for its lack of nuclear weapons and the perceived lack of international standing that came with them.

The Euromissile: Germany's last attempt?

While the 1970s did not provide for significant developments concerning Germany's nuclear policy, the internal dispute over the Euromissiles or Theater Nuclear Force (TNF) that ensued during the early 80s was therefore even more explosive.

³³ Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy*, 57.

³⁴ Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy*, 195.

³⁵ The White House, *Briefing papers for U.S. visit of Chancellor Erhard 9/26-9/27/66: Amb. Schnippenkoetter's approach to German participation in NATO nuclear defense arrangements* (White House: Issue Date: Sep 21, 1966). Document is now declassified.

The modernization of NATO's Intermediate Range Force (INF) was, in part, its reaction to Russia's deployment of SS-20 Intermediate-range Ballistic Missiles. The strategy was dubbed the 'double-track' approach, consisting of both a deployment and a negotiation track. The deployment track foresaw the production and deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles, while at the same time offering, through the negotiation track, to talk with the Soviets about limiting INF on each side. The initiative was largely motivated by the European members' perception that the continued Soviet growth in strategic nuclear and conventional forces would eventually lead to a "decoupling" of European security from that of the United States.³⁶ In detail, the United States would be deterred from protecting Europe in case of a Soviet conventional or locally limited nuclear attack by the vast arsenal of Russian strategic forces. This appeared to be a revival of the fears that existed during the late 1950s, when the concept of extended deterrence and US commitment was questioned. The INF, however, was not viewed as favorable by all Europeans since a nuclear balance on the continent would add to the ability to contain hostilities to a local theater. This development was certainly advantageous for the United States, but less desirable from a European standpoint.³⁷

For Germany, the discussion was even more multi-faceted. Beyond the discussion within NATO, Germany was eying the longer range of the INF. Up to that point, a wide spread strategic assumption was that the Alliance could show sufficient resolve by detonating nuclear weapons on German soil, hence stopping a Soviet attack without

³⁶ Jeffrey Boutwell, *The German Nuclear Dilemma* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 2.

³⁷ Breyman, *Why Movements Matter*, 7.

provoking massive Russian retaliation. From a German viewpoint, this was certainly an unsatisfying thought.³⁸

The argument was not convincing enough for the German population and the discussion not only caused a rift within the government but provoked a massive public outcry with significant political implications. The gap between the government's view of the necessary steps for German security and the public's willingness to follow became insurmountable. Eventually, the government lost what was at time viewed as "the battle for the hearts and minds of the citizens of the Federal Republic."³⁹

The German public disconnected?

The German public began to voice its opinion about its government's nuclear policy right from the beginning. However, the anti-nuclear movement always had to compete with other national and international interests, at times prohibiting its success and defining the composition of the protesting groups. There was certainly a broad public consensus that, due to the crimes committed by Germany during the Nazi-era, the country should not pursue ownership of nuclear weapons.⁴⁰ Besides, NATO's nuclear strategy, that Germany had been part of since joining the Alliance in 1955, always caused some resentment among the German population and its feeling of guilt and fear of war. It was never wholeheartedly embraced by the population.⁴¹

Kampf dem Atomtod

In 1957, Konrad Adenauer, the policy-defining entity within the first decade of post war Germany, won the absolute majority of the federal elections enabling him and his party to govern the country without the restraints of a coalition partner. Provided with this power

³⁸ Beatrice Heuser, *Nuclear Mentalities? : Strategies and Belief in Britain, France, and the FRG* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 179.

³⁹ Boutwell, *The German Nuclear Dilemma*, 3.

⁴⁰ Heuser, *Nuclear Mentalities?*, 182.

⁴¹ Breyman, *Why Movements Matter* 231.

over the German Bundestag, he declared in 1958, after a heated debate with the opposition, his intention to arm the German Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons. The opposition was able to mobilize the population and 100,000 Germans took their protest to the street chanting “*Kampf dem Atomtod* (Fight against nuclear death).”⁴² However, at the same time, Adenauer’s party was able to secure the absolute majority during a state election in North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW), the most populous state in Germany. He secured this victory on a political platform based on his strong security policy including nuclear weapons. The implications were certainly noticed by the SPD.⁴³

How did Adenauer succeed, though, in convincing the German population to vote for him despite their apprehension towards nuclear weapons? Part of the answer to this question can be traced to the composition of the protesters in the late 50s. A large percentage was affiliated with the protestant church and labor union, not the typical voters for Adenauer’s CDU. On the other hand, his followers, who were basically also against the acquisition of nuclear weapons (71% opposed them), agreed with him on his security minded policy and welcomed his successful economic programs. Therefore, they would not sacrifice Adenauer and his policy for a perceived smaller evil of nuclear weapons.⁴⁴

Adenauer was able to convincingly tie the issue of nuclear armament to a broader package for a clientele beyond his own party. Most Germans, obviously, appreciated his advancements with regards to sovereignty, economic success, and hope for reunification more than they

⁴² Jeffrey Boutwell, “Politics and the Peace Movement in West Germany,” *International Security* Vol. 7, No. 4 (Spring, 1983): 72-92, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2626732> (accessed 16 March 2011), 75.

⁴³ Boutwell, “Politics and the Peace Movement in West Germany,” 75.

⁴⁴ Alice Holmes Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace : German Peace Movements since 1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 33.

opposed the strife over nuclear weapons. Hence, they bought his package deal.⁴⁵

The basic grievances of the population, the rearmament issue, disagreement over NATO membership, and finally nuclear weapons, were not sufficiently addressed or even recognized by the government.

Adenauer was able to gloss over some of the public's complaints by pointing to 'more pressing' issues without acknowledging the widening gap between his security policy and the population.⁴⁶

Easter Marches: An idea was born

Since the actual cause for disagreement with the government was never removed, the willingness of the population to demonstrate against nuclear policy was also lingering. Large scale marches against nuclear armament (and later civilian use as well) became a recurring event. In the 1960s they became known as the *Ostermaersche* (Easter marches) since they always rallied on that particular weekend. The popularity of those marches grew again in the middle of the decade, as *Der Spiegel* publicized.⁴⁷ The size of the report in the popular magazine and barely 100,000 reported participants, however, showed that overall acceptance lagged behind the spontaneous gathering in the late 50s. The movement fell victim to the fact that the dominant nuclear topic of that particular time, the MLNF, was never close enough to being implemented before it was finally aborted. In addition, the "peace movement lacked the galvanizing peace issue comparable to the introduction of nuclear weapons in the 1950s and had to share some of its demands for a new foreign policy with the SPD and others. In the end, peace became submerged in other issues and in a much broader wave of protest, and

⁴⁵ Boutwell, "Politics and the Peace Movement in West Germany," 77.

⁴⁶ Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 32.

⁴⁷ *Der Spiegel*, "Marschierer" *Der Spiegel*, no. 15 (April 1964): 15, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46174330.html>. (accessed 16 March 2011).

the peace movement met its demise when the broader extra parliamentary opposition disintegrated.”⁴⁸

The fact that this phenomenon of a public outcry could be muffled by greater interest in the overall policy of its government would change during the next, significantly anti-nuclear weapons phase.

The 80s' protest marches: An idea 25 years in the making

The main focus of the public protests during the time between 1979 and 1983 was the INF and subsequent debate on deploying Pershing II missiles to Germany. However, this time the social movement against nuclear technology was not only aimed at the military application but also civilian use of atomic power. The measures included mass demonstrations of hundreds of thousands but also direct blockades of military installations and nuclear power plants such as Brockdorff. The movement was declared the largest West Germany had ever seen. The number of participants and variety of targets distinguished the marches of the 80s from its earlier forms, and the social composition showed a much greater array of political and non-political groups as well. Within this composition, each of the smaller groups linked the issue over the planned missile deployment to its own set of concerns, with the opposition to the NATO strategy as the common denominator.⁴⁹ The Green Party was the most famous political group to emerge from the general rise of various political movements. It was able to collect 1.5 million signatures urging Chancellor Schmidt to withdraw from the INF.⁵⁰ Interestingly, though, the reemerging peace- and anti-nuclear-weapons movement, originating from the “*Kampf dem Atomtod*” movement, was initiated by the SPD. This is the same party that is now feeling the brunt of the resistance to their own policy. At the core of the grievance appeared to be yet another topic, the GER-US relationship and

⁴⁸ Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 84.

⁴⁹ Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 151.

⁵⁰ Boutwell, *The German Nuclear Dilemma*, 148.

the feeling that, in the face of failing SALT II negotiations and East-West relations, Germany was a mere chessboard for the super powers.⁵¹

Although the marches and actions against the implementation of the INF were unsuccessful in stopping the first Pershing II missiles from being deployed, the movement did cause more than just a new awareness of international politics in Germany. It put enough pressure on the government and provided enough leverage for the political opposition in the Bundestag to replace the Schmidt-government in 1983.⁵² Overall, each distinct period of German nuclear policy appeared to have a public protest movement to accompany it. Although none were successful in immediately changing the country's policy, they did have a long-term impact on the way German governments approached nuclear policy.

Conclusion

The evolution of Germany's nuclear policy was largely determined by its Allies' nuclear programs, mistrust of a nuclear armed Germany, and a shift in focus from security mindedness to power politics supported by the might of nuclear armament. The initial setup, of Germany providing the vehicles to employ nuclear warheads that remained under US control, proved to be the longest lasting model. The Federal Republic never managed to convince the United States to render control over any nuclear weapons to Germany and the NPT closed the book on any aspirations to procure an independent nuclear weapons program. However, Germany did succeed in gaining a more influential position within the various NATO planning groups dealing with the employment of nuclear weapons. The Federal Republic was able to have at least minor influence on the Alliance's nuclear policy through representation in NATO's NPG and gain economical status through its advanced civilian nuclear power program.

⁵¹ Boutwell, *The German Nuclear Dilemma*, 128.

⁵² Boutwell, *The German Nuclear Dilemma*, 151.

Even though the predominant motivation for the German government to strive for physical control or planning input on policy relating to nuclear weapons was supposedly a security issue, the underlying goals appeared to be of a different nature. Germany's real intentions to pursue nuclear weapons was the status itself and the perceived lack of credibility and influence if Germany did not have nuclear weapons. This feeling of being second class members of any institution they would share with Britain and France was certainly fostered by those countries. Both justified costs and political strains on the Alliance with the gain of political might.⁵³ This is not a too unfamiliar picture of present day politics.

While a broad consensus defined the political life of the German government, the population was increasingly disengaged from the political reasoning for the utilization of nuclear power. When the government finally failed to tie the bitter pill of nuclear armament to a broader political agenda, the public successfully demanded a change in long-term politics. The Green Party, most especially, used the weapon of public opinion and outrage convincingly in order to promote its own agenda of environmental issues. With elections every four years, the public views every government's nuclear policy, military and civilian alike, with suspicion, ready to show its dissatisfaction at the ballot box.

⁵³ Walter Lippmann described Germany's perception of losing international reputation by not being member of the nuclear-weapons-owner club. Das Problem ist nicht, wie die Bundesrepublik gegen einen sowjetischen Angriff besser geschützt werden könnte. Der eigentliche Gegenstand der Diskussionen ist, wie es der Londoner "Economist" vor einigen Wochen schrieb, daß die Deutschen "die Versicherung haben wollen, sie würden durch einen Verzicht auf die Multilaterale Atomstreitmacht nicht dazu verdammt werden, dauernd eine zweitrangige Rolle in Europa zu spielen". Dies ist in der Tat das Problem - nicht die Verteidigung der Bundesrepublik, sondern wie man ihr das Gefühl geben kann, daß sie den gleichen Status wie England und Frankreich hat." Lippmann, "Die Deutschen aus Misstrauen zum Narren Gehalten."

Chapter 4

Nuclear Solutions: From Independent Nuclear Weapon Programs to Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZ)

The discussion thus far has focused on how Germany ended up providing nuclear weapon capable platforms to deliver weapons that actually remain under US control. Fulfilling its part of the burden sharing program as agreed upon in NATO's strategies, Germany still hosts a stockpile of US nuclear weapons at a base in the western part of the country. While Germany has profited from the nuclear umbrella it actively participated in for over half a century, there are different opinions about how to either integrate or exclude nuclear weapons in the country's security and overall policy. In this chapter, general thoughts and examples considering the basic three possibilities of how to approach nuclear weapons will be displayed before a discussion of those approaches with regards to Germany will conclude the final chapter of this thesis.

First, a look at France and its independent nuclear program will highlight reasons why a country might chose to develop its own nuclear weapons. Secondly, a general introduction of the diametrically opposite argument, namely to abolish nuclear weapons creating a NWFZ, will exemplify another solution. Last but not least, participation in the nuclear weapon sharing program Germany chose for itself will be examined at from a more critical standpoint, focusing on the controversy the program caused in relation to the NPT.

The nuclear option: France's independent nuclear weapon program

A France without world responsibility would be unworthy of herself, especially in the eyes of Frenchmen. It is for this reason that she disapproves of NATO, which denies her a share in decision-making and which is confined to Europe. It is for this reason too that she intends to provide herself with

atomic armament. Only in this way can our defense and foreign policy be independent, which is something we prize above everything else.

Charles DeGaulle

While the reasons to begin an independent nuclear program might differ from maintaining an existing one, this study will focus on the reasons that motivated France to start its nuclear independence. In combination with the previous chapters, this will lay the foundation to discuss whether such an approach is feasible for a German strategy in the 21st century. David Yost has analyzed the French nuclear strategy in detail and three of his main assertions to explain the French approach will be looked at more closely: the need for strategic independence and self reliance, its status and imperialistic attitude, and its influence within NATO and conceptual differences with regard to a common strategy.

Independence and self reliance

In the post World War II era, France was initially heavily dependent on US support in every regard. As pointed out in the previous chapters, neither its economy nor its military were able to fulfill the role the French assigned to those main political pillars. However, with troops stretched thinly across its fading empire, the French hardly had a choice but to conform to American policy. Thoughts about an independent nuclear program started in France when the gap between American and French interest began to widen to a point where it was seemingly insurmountable. The need to think about their own strategic alignment grew even more with doubts regarding US commitment to the European defense. When the Soviet Union proclaimed their own strategic nuclear force to counter the American stockpile and enable them to reach the North American continent, the trust in US commitment suffered another critical blow.¹ On one hand, it was the distrust that the United States

¹ Wilfrid L Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton, N.J.,: Princeton University Press, 1971), 39.

would refuse to get involved in supporting French interests while pursuing wars outside of France's national interest, hence dragging them into engagements that did not enhance France's status. This deviation from French core interest eventually provided the reason to stop a wholehearted support of NATO. On the other hand, an independent strategic nuclear force would provide France with the necessary means of self-reliance and also the option to withhold support in conflicts that were foreign to its interests.²

The crisis of the Suez Canal in 1956 epitomized this fear of dependency and marked a crucial event in the evolution of a French independent nuclear program. "Abandoned by the British and subjected to pressure by the United States in the face of Soviet rocket-rattling, many Frenchmen were driven to conclude that the only true means of national defense rested in an autonomous French nuclear capacity."³ Considering themselves as being blackmailed through nuclear threat, the French were wondering how to continue an independent policy in the face of diverging interests with the Americans.

When France pursued its independent nuclear program in the 1960s, it was profiting from permissive geographical and political circumstances. Geographically sheltered by allies, France had the luxury of getting by with a relatively small nuclear force since it did not have to fear a direct Russian attack. Any assault would most probably involve one of its neighbors first, hence get the United States and its strategic nuclear force involved before France had to commit its own weapons.⁴ This geographic and political setup provided the French with the ability to claim reliance on their independence when they were also

² David S Yost, *France's Deterrent Posture and Security in Europe*, Adelphi Papers; No. 194-195 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1984), 5.

³ Lawrence Scheinman, *Atomic Energy Policy in France under the Fourth Republic* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 171.

⁴ Yost, *France's Deterrent Posture*, 2.

relying on US retaliatory power before a possible attack reached their territory.

In the eyes of its allies though, the French independent nuclear program was not necessarily a blessing. By establishing nuclear independency France had proven that “membership in the world’s nuclear club was obtainable.”⁵ As a consequence, this might encourage other nations to follow suit, hence promote uncontrolled nuclear proliferation.

Grand Power Status and Imperialistic Attitude

Considering France’s geographical situation and security situation in Europe, it does appear as if military reasons to pursue an independent nuclear weapon program were rather supplemental factors within the French grand strategy. Preserving its status and gaining respect as a major power within the Atlantic alliance, on eye level with the United States and certainly Great Britain, was a more predominant goal.⁶ By the time France thought more seriously about its nuclear program, the military threat posed by Germany was most certainly not a motivating factor either, since France had already agreed to rearmament and integration of Germany into NATO. It was less the threat posed by Germany but rather the desire to subordinate the former enemy who was recovering both economically and politically faster than expected.⁷

However, the French aspirations went far beyond its own national borders and also the European continent. After the dreadful experience of World War II, France’s imperialistic claims were being. The French policy of the mid 1950s was clearly focused on achieving its prewar status as a great power.⁸ As Prime Minister Henri Queille stated, “NATO’s power standing group should go beyond consultative functions

⁵ Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*, 3.

⁶ Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*, 42.

⁷ Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*, 6.

⁸ Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*, 35.

in the European region to become a kind of world directorate coordinating the global policies of the Big Three of the Alliance.”⁹ DeGaulle reconfirmed this policy by pointing out that France would “not accept chronic and overwhelming inferiority.”¹⁰

The French, convinced by their feeling they could not rely on their allies to support their interests outside of Europe, concluded that they needed their own nuclear weapons. General Paul Geradot summed up this French aspiration to Great Power status, “France must, therefore, if she wishes to remain a great power and to enter into the club of the greats in order to make her civilizing action felt, build atomic weapons as soon as possible.”¹¹

France, NATO, and their conceptual differences

France’s troubled relationship with NATO and its strategy began with a staunch belief in massive retaliation and that the value of extended deterrence is limited at best. That did not mean that the usefulness of American strategic nuclear weapons was disregarded altogether, but as a sole means of a country’s defense it was unsuitable. France was convinced that strategic nuclear forces were only capable of protecting the country that actually has control over them. The deterrence value of strategic nuclear weapons in combination with a doctrine of massive retaliation led to the development of the French ICBM and rejection of the flexible response of the United States and NATO strategy. At the same time, France was considering sacrificing the tactical branch of its nuclear weapon program in favor of a more strategic alignment. The general deterrence concept, known as Doctrine Of All Directions, was abandoned in 1969, redirecting the focus of efforts towards the east. In an expected assault by the Soviet Union, tactical nuclear weapons were considered useful in order to deliver a warning

⁹ Yost, *France's Deterrent Posture*, 4.

¹⁰ Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*, 15.

¹¹ Scheinman, *Atomic Energy Policy in France*, 187.

shot and test a possible attacker's resolve and plans. This policy was made possible by France's geographical situation, with Germany providing a buffer zone, hence buying time and providing the territory for the warning shot strategy. The utilization of tactical nuclear weapons as a precursor for strategic weapons was manifested in the 1972 White Paper.¹²

Cost-benefit calculations played another major role in the French decision for an independent nuclear weapons program and in defining its nuclear policy. Due to the immense costs involved in the program, equipment for the conventional arm had to be sacrificed.¹³ Since France had to shoulder the costs unilaterally, the argument of the old fear of a reemerging Germany was used again. But there was also the connection to France's great power aspirations as the French Minister of Defense pointed out in 1958: "An armed force without nuclear weapons is outmoded or becomes incapable of national defense."¹⁴ This argument sounds familiar when looking back at Germany's argument to arm its Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons.

The decision to proceed with a nuclear weapon program was also supported by France's increasingly weakening conventional posture in Europe and amongst its NATO allies. The war in Algeria was draining the country of the troops required to fulfill its alliance obligations and an increasingly more powerful Germany was obviously gaining more influence in NATO. France blamed its lack of capacity to play the major role that it deemed appropriate in the strategic direction and decision-

¹² David Yost provides a detailed description of the points made above in his analysis. Yost, *France's Deterrent Posture*, 6-9.

¹³ The nuclear weapons portion of the defense budget was 24.3% in 1960-69, 16.9% in 1969-74 and 14% in 1974-80. The costs included expenditures for tactical nuclear weapons as well as IRBMs and SSBN. Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*, 31.

¹⁴ Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*, 32.

making councils on her nuclear inferiority. This situation had to be remedied.¹⁵

Overall, the political, economical, and perceived military threat, combined with Great Power aspirations and a distrust of its Allies drove France towards pursuing an independent nuclear weapon program. In the last Chapter, an analysis of those factors and a comparison to Germany's situation will lead to conclusions about which factors are applicable and whether France's approach is a viable option for the Federal Republic as well.

The Non-nuclear Option: NWFZ and the South East Asian example

The dominant factor in the development of interest in the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones has been the desire to secure the complete absence of nuclear weapons from various areas of the globe, where suitable conditions exist for the creation of such zones, to spare the nations concerned from the threat of nuclear attack or involvement in nuclear war, to make a positive contribution towards general and complete disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and thereby to strengthen international peace and security.

United Nations Conference of the Committee on Disarmament

The concept of NWFZ as described in the citation above is almost as old as nuclear weapons themselves and has become more appealing ever since. However, few examples exist where the concept has been successfully transferred into a practical application. To evaluate the usefulness for a possible German grand strategy with regards to nuclear weapons, a brief introduction of general concepts and obstacles as well as a practical example of a NWFZ will provide the basis for the discussion provided in the last chapter.

¹⁵ Scheinman, *Atomic Energy Policy in France*, 190.

Goals and obstacles concerning NWFZ

NWFZ have certain goals and characteristics in common that delineate them from zones that merely lack the presence of nuclear weapons. Although these goals and objectives are certainly defined for each particular zone by the participating countries, there are common denominators that all treaties focus on. Countries establishing a NWFZ are generally hoping that their example may provide a blueprint for other areas to follow and thereby further limit the influence of the greater powers. Preventing storage, deployment, and stockpiling within the zone will contribute to this limiting impact on great power maneuver space.¹⁶ Smaller states, especially, would benefit from such development and could use the principles and rules of NWFZ as mechanisms for their foreign policy.¹⁷ A second goal is to enhance peace and security and prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons within the region and put a limit on the arms-race involved in nuclear weapons procurement.¹⁸ In that regard, NWFZ are mutually complementary to the NPT. Third, the money saved by limiting arms expenditures could be spent on social and economic projects. This only holds true, of course, if there were expenditures in the field of nuclear weapons to begin with.¹⁹

In order for a NWFZ to be successfully implemented, the UN Commission suggests a number of conditions and principles that have to be met and followed. One of these premises is that the security situation of the countries participating in the NWFZ has to improve by their participation. Especially for countries that either possess or host nuclear weapons, this poses a great challenge and the improvement of their security environment through the absence of nuclear weapons might not

¹⁶ United Nations, Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, *Comprehensive Study of the Question of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in All Its Aspects* (New York, 1976), 38.

¹⁷ Arlene Idol Broadhurst, and Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament, *Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones : A Comparative Analysis of Theory and Practice* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament, 1987), 34-5.

¹⁸ United Nations, *Comprehensive Study*, 29.

¹⁹ Broadhurst et al., *Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones*, 37.

be readily visible. The Commission also suggests that within a NWFZ all participants have to join, and do so voluntarily, a means of verification has to be established, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy promoted. Last but not least, the NWFZ participants need to acquire a guarantee given by the nuclear weapon states (NWS) that they will not be attacked or threatened by nuclear weapons.²⁰ This prerequisite, the involvement of non-participatory NWS whose freedom of action will be limited, poses one of the greatest challenges.

Three major obstacles will be discussed in general terms since they will prove fundamental not only for the example provided in the following section but also with regards to a solution for a German grand strategy. Those obstacles are: the conflict of implementing a NWFZ and existing alliances, the definition of the concerned territory including the question of transit and transport through and within this area, and the policy of countries not part of the NWFZ, especially NWS.

Since most countries are already part of one alliance or another, a hierarchy has to be established as to which treaty takes precedence over the other. Obligations towards existing alliances might prohibit the unconditional participation in a NWFZ. Germany voiced this concern during the workshop leading up to the United Nations Committee's study. Pointing out that the implementation of a NWFZ cannot be an island solution, the German participants saw insurmountable obstacles presented by an existing alliance like NATO and a NWFZ.²¹ Other countries might approach this problem with more flexibility, simply including a "war time clause" in their declaration, as Denmark and Norway did while declaring their countries nuclear weapon free.²²

The definition of territory appears simple if it only involves a landlocked country. However, if the NWFZ includes international waters

²⁰ United Nations, *Comprehensive Study*, 29-30.

²¹ United Nations, *Comprehensive Study*, 87.

²² Broadhurst et al., *Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones*, 40-1.

the matter is not quite as simple anymore. The right of free and unobstructed navigation might be in conflict with the NWFZ's prohibition of any nuclear weapon transit or transportation within its boundaries.²³ Other problems arise if the territory includes enclaves of non-signatory countries, especially NWS. An example is the Rarotonga Protocol that includes enclaves governed by the United States, Great Britain and France.²⁴

Last but not least, the prerequisite that the implementation of a NWFZ enhances the security of its member states presumably demands that the NWS guarantee not to threaten countries within the NWFZ. This demand is particularly controversial whenever countries are also signatories to security alliances with direct or indirect access to nuclear weapons. Why would, for example, a NWS limit itself by guaranteeing not to threaten a NWFZ member if that very member is comfortably covered by a nuclear umbrella through a third country's nuclear weapons shield?²⁵ The difficulty of circumnavigating all those obstacles becomes more apparent when looking at an actual example that, at first glance, appears to provide favorable conditions

The South East Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ)

In 1995, ten countries, who were all signatories of the NPT as well, signed the Protocol for the implementation of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in South East Asia, the SEANWFZ. The main goal of the participating countries was to prevent the deployment of nuclear weapons into the territory of the SEANWFZ rather than abolishing existing weapons. Hence, the focus of the ensuing negotiations was to a large degree on external states, especially NWS with significant interests within the declared territory. As a secondary goal, the treaty was

²³ United Nations, *Comprehensive Study*, 37.

²⁴ Jan Gilbert Rivenburg, and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Implications of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones in the International System* (Monterey, Calif., 1988), 16.

²⁵ United Nations, *Comprehensive Study*, 38.

supposed to serve as a crisis prevention tool reducing the risk of the nuclear powers engaging in hostilities.²⁶ The NWFZ was preceded by the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in 1971. The ZOPFAN already contained some of the main characteristics the future NWFZ would show. As a precursor, the treaty helped to build a foundation of trust and faith amongst the signatories to the NWFZ, making the transition much smoother than otherwise expected.²⁷ The ZOPFAN did not cease to exist with the creation of the NWFZ. Both agreements lent mutual credibility to each other and ensured that horizontal proliferation would be prevented, the region would not become a target for any NWS, and better relations within the boundaries of the NWFZ were promoted.²⁸ Even though the particular ideas included in the example of the SEANWFZ closely resembled the basic principles laid out by the UN committee, so did the obstacles.

The opposition to the implementation of the NWFZ came from within and outside of the envisioned territory alike. The countries that would eventually sign the declaration had to grapple with the advantages a nuclear weapon program would provide. The desired gains included profiting from nuclear deterrence, fostering great power ambitions, acquiring nuclear weapons as last resort weapons, and obtaining the “ultimate symbol of power-political independence,” hence, all the reasons why the NWS invested in their respective nuclear weapons program. The NWS themselves also claimed an interest in maintaining the status quo. The United States had plans to station more nuclear weapons in allied countries within the future NWFZ, the Chinese were perceived as posing

²⁶ Bilveer Singh and the Australian National University give a detailed account of the Asian NWFZ and its implications for the involved nuclear weapon states. Bilveer Singh, and Australian National University. Strategic and Defence Studies Centre “Asean, the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and the Challenge of Denuclearisation in Southeast Asia : Problems and Prospects”, *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence*; No.138 (Canberra, Australia: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies Australian National University, 2000), 23.

²⁷ Sing, Asean, *the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone*, 29.

²⁸ Sing, Asean, *the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone*, 32.

a nuclear threat, and Britain had a firm grip on Indonesia. From an Indonesian perspective that grip was also based on the British nuclear posture.²⁹ After all, the ten future signatories were already feeling the impacts of new fissures in their relationship amongst each other created by the polarizing effects of the two superpowers' increased interest in their territory. As already stated above the conflict of implementing a NWFZ including international waters would cause some countries, whose vital interests were infringed upon, to oppose. The United States, for example, was not ready to give up its freedom of movement in international air and maritime navigation, hence objected to the treaty.³⁰

The breakthrough for negotiations finally leading to the signing of the agreement in 1995 came through the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from the region by Russia and the United States in 1991. The improving relations between the two countries and subsequent withdrawal of bases from Vietnam and the Philippines created the conditions for successful negotiations.³¹ In the end, therefore, it was not so much the agreement amongst the primary countries signing up for the implementation of a NWFZ, but the NWS having a vested interest in the area. The German delegation to the UN Committee workshop summed it up stating: "A NWFZ cannot be an island solution but has to be seen in a greater context."³²

The Nuclear Sharing Option: The validity of an old principle

Why and how Germany ended up with nuclear sharing program has been stated in the previous chapters and its current policy outlined in the introduction. In order to evaluate the validity of the sharing program for Germany in the 21st century, it is necessary to look at other positions and reasons why it might not be recommendable for the

²⁹ Sing, *Asean, the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone*, 26.

³⁰ Sing, *Asean, the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone*, 44.

³¹ Sing, *Asean, the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone*, 37-8.

³² United Nations, *Comprehensive Study*, 87.

Federal Republic to continue down this road. Canada will serve as a case study for a country that actually began and aborted the nuclear sharing program during the same time frame that Germany continued its policy of burden sharing. A summary of a research group investigating the legal footing of the program will provide a different angel to the merits of nuclear sharing.

The Canadian experience

The situation in Canada resembles the German one of the early 1950s in numerous ways. When Canada's government began to seriously consider sharing the burden of a nuclear posture in 1963, there were already a significant number of US installations deployed on Canadian territory.³³ Comparable to Germany, the driving force behind the acquisition of nuclear capable platforms and agreement of control arrangements was the government, mainly Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, who had just shortly prior won the election. In addition, Canada was already well established in NATO and its contribution, compared to its Gross National Production (GNP), was larger than that of any other member of the alliance.³⁴ Therefore, from a Canadian standpoint, the question was not whether it would fully emerge in the western alliance or not, but whether it would be a weak and reluctant participant or a powerful and effective force.³⁵

Besides this aspiration for greater power and influence in international politics, three main reasons appear to have been the predominant motivation for the Canadian engagement: First, politically, Canada assumed it was obligated to share the burden in order to make a more identifiable, but also cost-efficient contribution to the alliance. Secondly, it felt economically pressured by the United States fearing that

³³ Andrew Richter, *Avoiding Armageddon: Canadian Military Strategy and Nuclear Weapons, 1950-63* Studies in Canadian Military History (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 132.

³⁴ Richter, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 155.

³⁵ Richter, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 157.

if it did not fulfill the sharing agreements, the Americans would reduce the other military production sharing arrangements for Canada's conventional force.³⁶ Last but not least, proliferation through participation in nuclear sharing as opposed to an independent nuclear weapons program was not considered a problem since Canada would not appear as the owner of the nuclear weapons. The statement: "If necessary nuclear weapons for Canada but not necessarily Canadian nuclear weapons" summed up this perception.³⁷

The actual control agreement, however, was probably more balanced than such a statement would indicate. In fact, the arrangement must have given Canadian authorities a lot more leverage than a similar agreement signed by the United States and Germany, since the United States explicitly insisted that Canada would not reveal details to German authorities.³⁸ But even in the face of such "favorable" conditions for a nuclear sharing program, Canada aborted its nuclear experiment in 1986 relinquishing all controlling authority over nuclear weapons.

Nuclear sharing and the NPT

The benefits of nuclear sharing for the receiving country certainly depend on the perception of the gains and the control agreement that define the perceived ownership of nuclear weapons. For NATO, the sharing program also means a more even spread of the costs and risks involved in nuclear deployment and the demonstration of solidarity in sharing this burden.³⁹ However, for others there are legal issues and conflicts with existing treaties like the NPT. One main point of conflict is the Article II of the NPT:

³⁶ John Clearwater, *Canadian nuclear weapons: The untold story of Canada's Cold War arsenal* (Toronto; Buffalo, N.Y.: Dundum Press, 1998), 29.

³⁷ Clearwater, *Canadian nuclear weapons*, 31.

³⁸ Clearwater, *Canadian nuclear weapons*, 44.

³⁹ Sir Hugh Beach, "The End of Nuclear Sharing? US Nuclear Weapons in Europe," *Rusi Journal* Vol. 15, no. 6 (December 2009), 52.

Each non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or of control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other explosive devices; and not to seek or receive any assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

Article II, Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

The argument focuses on the assumption that NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements might violate the basic idea, if not the letter, of the NPT itself. As a possible way out, a study recommends either abolishing the sharing program altogether or at least publishing the documents of the sharing agreements for all NPT parties to evaluate for themselves as to whether the agreement violates the NPT or not. This argument is well-known amongst the participants of the nuclear sharing program. Their counter argument is, however, that the NPT does not apply during "general war."⁴⁰ If this argumentation holds true, does this also apply to the NWFZ, as the Danish and Norwegians argue? How valuable are those treaties if the signatories can use the weapons or at least get control of their effects during war time when employment during peace time is not an option anyway? So far, these questions are interpreted differently by the various countries and interest groups.

Conclusion

The three stated options provide a wide variety of possible strategies for Germany. France certainly had its reasons and different perspective to engage in its own independent nuclear weapon program. Historically consequent, the country followed its Great Power aspirations

⁴⁰ Martin Butcher, British American Security Information Council, and Berliner Informationszentrum fuer Transatlantische Sicherheit, *Question of Command and Control: NATO, Nuclear Sharing and the NPT*, (Penn Research Report; 2000.1. S.I.: Project on European Nuclear Non Proliferation (PENN), 2000), 7-9.

and refused to rely on any other nation to fend for it. The community of South East Asian countries went the opposite direction and abandoned the use of any form of nuclear weapon or its deterrent through third parties by establishing a NWFZ. The obstacles, however, are immense and largely contextual, hence out of the control of the signatories to the treaty. Lastly, a closer look at the nuclear sharing program demonstrates that sometimes even under the most ideal circumstances nuclear sharing is not valued enough for some countries to maintain their participation. Besides, there are concerns about the moral and legal validity with regards to the NPT and other non-nuclear security arrangements like a NWFZ. Looking back at the investigation of the previous chapters, how do those options relate to Germany's particular situation?



Chapter 5

German Grand Strategy: Between Nuclear Apprehension and Power Politics

Germany is not France, Germany is embedded in numerous alliances and signatory to multiple treaties, and Germany does not currently face a vital and imminent threat. Those are just three of the numerous factors that have to be considered when reflecting on a future German nuclear posture, but as discussed in the previous chapters, they are defining ones that have visibly shaped post WWII German politics. The journey from occupied Germany to becoming one of the most powerful countries in Europe has been laid out and implications for the Federal Republic's security needs analyzed.

How does one explain Germany's reluctance toward nuclear weapons, and what implications does this have for the future of German nuclear policy? Returning to those questions raised in the introduction of this thesis, the presented evidence in the subsequent chapters suggests that the answer to the first part lies in Germany's post WWII history. The political landscape, security situation, and societal mold of the German population, impacted by Nazi Germany and the total destruction of their country, help explain how Germany ended with strong feelings about nuclear weapons. Comparing the initial phase of the reemerging Republic under the Adenauer government to the French approach of using their military instrument of power, and analyzing the concept of NWFZ, provides the basis for suggesting a nuclear policy for Germany, in the short term as well as long term.

The long shadow of WWII: Realists can't always win

While the German government of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer showed significant interest in German rearmament and nuclear weapons, the population never grew accustomed to the military

application of nuclear power and began to protest its deployment with growing enthusiasm. The reason behind this hostility certainly has roots in Germany's recent history. The lack of trust in its own government was still present after the devastating experience with the Nazi regime. After all, it was Germany, and especially its National Socialist government, that plunged Europe into WWII. Only the obvious threat to the survival of their country convinced the population at the time to favor Adenauer and his security policy over a stronger opposition towards rearmament and nuclear weapons. Once this threat decreased to a tolerable level, the population more forcefully voiced its dismay with any nuclear ambitions. The distrust towards the government was expanded towards the perceived supporters of the war, the military, that made the expansionist policy possible. Hence, the post war population of Germany neither trusted its government nor its military to be equipped with weapons as powerful as the nuclear bomb. Besides, there was still the underlying feeling of guilt amongst the population for the mass atrocities committed in the recent past which they felt should prohibit ownership of any weapons, but certainly of nuclear ones.

The fact that France had acquired its own nuclear weapons program did not strike the Germans as a reason to follow down the same path, either. Post WWII, Germany did not have any of its neighbor's imperialist aspirations. Especially when the security situation improved, Germany began to rely more on its economic and diplomatic influence, focusing on Europe rather than the far abroad. Its Great Power ambitions were aimed at being a second tier country equal with France and Great Britain, rather than the United States and Russia.

But to dismiss nuclear weapons as a solution for Germany's security needs based purely on public demand would be omitting the government's responsibility for the nation's security. The government is responsible for balancing both the nation's security needs and the public's demands. In the end, if the population resents nuclear weapons

and rejects the idea of a threat perceived by the government, the government is in a dilemma it has to solve by pursuing a sensible and responsible nuclear policy.

At present, the population does not even appear to support peaceful nuclear power. Especially after the vulnerability of nuclear power plants and the risk involved has been demonstrated via the earthquake in Japan, public reactions in Germany have been significant. While it would suit the government well not to get too heavily involved in attempting to please the population in an emotional discussion about peaceful nuclear power and mirror image this discussion to the nuclear weapons realm, there are implications from the public reaction. To believe they would appreciate an independent nuclear program would be ludicrous unless there is an imminent, credible, and vital threat to the nation's survival that could be neutralized through nuclear weapons. In the early years of the Republic, Adenauer was able to convince his population of exactly that scenario. Linking the threatening security situation to his economic and diplomatic program of striving for more sovereignty allowed him to pursue the rearmament of the country. This might have enabled him to initiate a nuclear weapons program if the allies had signed off on the plan.

Besides the historic apprehension towards nuclear weapons, there are also legal stop gaps for a possible German nuclear program. Germany has agreed to abolish any independent nuclear weapons program aspirations three times. First, Chancellor Adenauer denounced any nuclear plan in order to pave the way for Germany to become a NATO member. Secondly, Germany became a signatory of the NPT and, last but not least, it "reaffirmed [its] renunciation of the manufacture and possession of and control over nuclear, biological and chemical weapons" when signing the Two-Plus-Four Treaty.¹ A security situation that would

¹ Article 3 of the 2+4 treaty

warrant a breach of all three of these pledges would have to be almost incomprehensibly grave in order to make the cost-benefit calculation for Germany worthwhile.

Conclusion 1: An independent nuclear weapons program is not a viable solution for short term or even long term. The peaceful use and therefore expertise is waning, the population unsupportive, and the security situation does not warrant the risks and costs involved. Therefore, an independent nuclear program is not a solution for a German nuclear posture.

Dealing with the present: Short term solutions

Considering the public discussion of nuclear power at this time, it would probably be politically rewarding during the next elections if the government decided to proclaim a NWFZ in Germany. But, is that an honest or even feasible approach? The UN Commission has pointed out the numerous obstacles presented by implementing a NWFZ in any region. The more ties to NWS a country enjoys and with neighbors that would not be signatories to such a zone the increasingly insurmountable implementation becomes. Denmark and Norway obviously have gone down that path but reserved the right to fall back to the nuclear option in case of a general war. The value of such a treaty appears questionable considering that nuclear weapons are rarely used during peacetime anyway. A more honest approach would be to acknowledge the existence of those obstacles with regards to a NWFZ and attempt to address them one by one. The implementation of a Non-nuclear weapon zone, hence a zone free of nuclear weapons without all the transit, transport, and extended deterrence conflicts could be a start. This would initially require the removal of all nuclear weapons and installations from German territory. At the same time, it would demand a reevaluation of which parts of the German defense structure, if any at all, would suffer from such a step. At the moment, it appears as if large parts of Germany's security needs can be fulfilled by national and international

law enforcement measures rather than the military arm. Especially counter-terrorism efforts have traditionally been a policing endeavor in concert with Germany's European partner organizations. This is supported by the public's perception that a 100% solution for security cannot be achieved, a strength the German government should play on. Very likely, the population would follow, thereby strengthening this approach.

At present, Germany is still participating in NATO's nuclear sharing program by providing platforms to deliver tactical nuclear weapons. The question lingers, though, as to whether the nuclear contribution of a few dropped tactical nuclear weapons would really show resolve and justify the costs. A respective scenario is hard to imagine at this time. Even if the security situation were to worsen to a degree that NATO had to defend its territory (and the Alliance was actually created for that purpose), it appears that the international community should have means other than tactical nuclear weapons to show resolve. The level of aggression during the Cold War was incomparably higher than it is right now, hence making the employment of more drastic means appear more promising. The threat to NATO territory that would require an escalation to the nuclear realm is not recognizable, hence denying credibility of the threat of the employment of tactical nuclear weapons. Therefore, escalating and showing that the Alliance is willing to enter a next level would be the use of conventional weapons in a major combat operation defending NATO territory.

The political gains Germany receives by participating in the nuclear sharing program appear to be countered by the internal resistance of the population. The unwillingness of the population to burden the risk of the program is internationally perceived as a lack of commitment and diminishes the gains in prestige that make the usefulness of the program for Germany questionable. The discussion of how long Germany might be able to continue its nuclear sharing

commitment has already drained the Federal Republic's standing within the Alliance to a degree that an effective withdrawal does not appear any more damaging. Freeing itself from the burden of the program would be fulfilling external expectations. On the other hand, such a step would most probably gain support from outside of the Alliance and chances are that there are even NATO members who are just waiting for one country to make a move in that direction.

Conclusion 2: For a short term nuclear posture, the implementation of a NWFZ with all the implications for transit, transport, and extended deterrence policy is not a viable and honest option. There is, however, a great chance to set the conditions for a long term solution without nuclear weapons beginning with the proclamation of a Non-nuclear weapon state. The concept of nuclear sharing does not increase Germany's security situation to a justifiable degree and the political damage by withdrawing from that program seems limited.

What's next: Using nuclear weapons a different way

If the short term nuclear posture is setting the conditions properly, the implementation of a NWFZ in central Europe with Germany leading the way is a realistic long term goal. With its strong economic and political influence in European and even world politics, Germany has the instruments of power, other than the military, to support the creation of a security environment without nuclear weapons as envisioned by President Obama. Certain conditions have to be met, however, in order to successfully set up such a solution.

First, as the German delegation to the UN working group pointed out, the implementation of a NWFZ is not a locally confined matter. The realization of such an intrusion into the security situation of a whole region is highly contextual. It would not only involve the signatories and immediate neighbors but mainly the NWS whose freedom of maneuverability would be limited. Especially within a tightly knit web of security organizations, like the Central European region provides, such a

step would require a long process of basic diplomacy to convince other nations to participate. A prohibition of the transit of nuclear weapons on the ground and through the air would have major implications for the eastern members of NATO, especially if they were to refuse to sign up to the idea of a NWFZ. A nuclear weapon free enclave within NATO-territory does not seem practicable.

Secondly, Germany should foster efforts to revise NATO's structure and purpose statement. As of now, it appears as if the Alliance is being hijacked for offensive military tasks that it was originally not created to fulfill. The demand for unanimous decision making, for example, does not appear overly suitable and feasible for actions that only some of the members deem necessary to support. At the same time, Germany has to investigate how the implementation of a NWFZ could be integrated into the defense system without the frictions mentioned above.

Thirdly, there will be some resentment and grief amongst some of Germany's allies but the geopolitical situation at present is most favorable. While the security situation does not warrant a continuation of any German nuclear engagement, the world public opinion is clearly focused on the reduction of military and civilian nuclear power. Germany's instruments of power, other than military, allow for such a bold move and there is an opportunity to set the long term conditions for a NWFZ without significantly damaging Germany's standing. While Adenauer had the opportunity to use the security situation to convince the public to buy into his rearmament and nuclear program, now would be the time to use public resentment to go a different direction. The lack of perceived commitment to the common security efforts, as it would most certainly be called, could be alleviated in part by committing more conventional capabilities, thereby using the money saved for better and more usable as opposed to useful equipment. For a rich country like Germany, the focus should not be on how much it would save, like it has been so frequently in the past, but how can resources be redirected into

a more militarily economic way. Therefore, a revised nuclear (or non-nuclear) posture also requires a rethinking about what the armed forces are supposed to be able to achieve. It is contextual both internationally and nationally. The massive restructuring process that the Bundeswehr is experiencing right now is a prime opportunity to think in that direction.

Conclusion 3: Abolishing nuclear weapons probably will not cost less if nuclear protection is replaced by conventional military capabilities and economic and diplomatic instruments of power. This approach will require a major effort in reconstructing national defense structures as well as alliances and respective commitments. While achieving the same results without nuclear weapons as with them or the protection of nuclear weapons from other countries, this nuclear power free policy would finally match the public demand and the dilemma for the government of aligning those two would be solved.

Summary

For more than 65 years now, Germany has enjoyed the solution of its immediate security issues by peaceful means. This does not mean that the military and especially nuclear weapons did not play a major role in achieving this and will also be a viable and indispensable instrument in the future to secure Germany's freedom and sovereignty. But the way the Federal Republic utilized this instrument of power has to be reconsidered and adjusted to match the security situation. While nuclear weapons arguably served their purpose in protecting Germany and allowing it to peacefully find its way back into the international community, their presence within the German defense strategy is not warranted anymore. At the same time, however, Germany is tied into international alliances and treaties that require a sensitive approach when deviating from the previous nuclear posture towards a policy without nuclear weapons. Abolishing nuclear weapons cannot be an ad hoc decision to be implemented over night, but decisions have to be

made now in order to implement them in the future. The geopolitical situation Germany is facing at this time allows the country to finally come to grips with its reluctance towards nuclear weapons and match public demand, security needs, and international obligations like the NPT, 2+4 treaty, and also Chancellor Adenauer's pledge not to pursue nuclear weapons.



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